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MY OWN STORY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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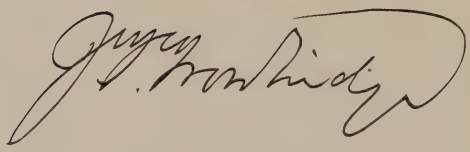
MY OWN STORY



MY OWN STORY

WITH RECOLLECTIONS OF NOTED PERSONS

BY

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE

ILLUSTRATED

Ne cede malis. — *Heraldic Motto.*

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1903

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Published September, 1903

FOREWARNING

THE significance of the saying (Carlyle's, is it not?) that the story of any man's life would have interest and value, if truly told, is recognized, I think, by the most of us; yet each is apt to fancy at least one exception to the rule, namely, his own particular life. This certainly was the case with myself, even up to the time when I was induced — reluctantly for that reason — to undertake these memoirs. I have therefore been not a little surprised at the manner in which the chapters that appeared in recent numbers of the Atlantic Monthly have been received, and can only attribute it to whatever success I may have had in fulfilling the condition that points the saying.

Yet that the story I tell is not the bare, absolute, unveiled verity I hasten to avow, in the interest of the truth which I believe in and would

sincerely serve. Under the purest tones of the violin, persists ever the dry, dreary, accompanying sound of the friction of the bow upon the strings; the player hears it, as likewise do any of his auditors who chance to be too near the instrument; but it is properly no part of the performance, and will not, if he is skilled, mar his musical numbers. Alas, if he be not skilled!

Skilled or otherwise, I have endeavored to hold my audience at a little distance. While aiming always at entire fidelity to the main and minor facts of my record, I have kept out of it as much as possible the ennuis and annoyances, the errors and heartaches, of which my life has doubtless been no freer than yours who peruse these pages, if as free. I say this especially to dispel the illusion in which some, I find, have followed the published magazine chapters, — that, in respect to discouragements and failures, human ills and frailties, mine has been an exception to the common lot. Strange illusion indeed!

I desire also to correct a quite different impression, derived from the same source, that I

have lived what in these later years is termed a "strenuous life." I do not greatly believe in the strenuous life for myself, much as I may admire it in another, and I had no idea that I was living it in the periods of struggle and not over-successful achievement I have portrayed. Our strivings after better things than wealth and power and display, even for complex intellectual acquirements and the accomplishment of the worthiest aims, may be too incessant and intense, and dry up in us the springs of spirit they should feed. We do not often enough rest in the divine passivity that heals the hurts of time and is the restoring bath of our being. Not that I would counsel a purposeless drifting, while choice of direction is left us, with strength of arm for the oar. Only dreams come to us in our sleep. Not alone the great prizes of life, but often the mind's solace and the body's health, wait upon work. The world is for endeavor; the world is the flint, the will of man the steel.

The heraldic motto on the title-page of these reminiscences (given also on a later page with its context in the Sibyl's charge to Æneas) is in

reality the motto of the Trowbridge coat of arms. The coat of arms I have no special interest or pride in, but the motto I deem worthy to be prized, to be cited, and to shape one's life by.

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Tu ne cede malis ; sed contra audentior ito,
Qua tua te Fortuna sinet.

Æneid VI., 95, 96.

Yield not, whatever woeful stroke may be
Thy portion, when befalls the evil day ;
But draw fresh courage from calamity,
And forward press, where Fortune points the way.

MY OWN STORY

CHAPTER I

A BACKWOODS BOYHOOD

I

My English ancestor, Thomas Trowbridge, of Taunton, came to this country about the year 1634. He was a grandson of that earlier Thomas who gave to the poor of Taunton the perpetual income from certain lands, to be dispensed by the wardens of St. Mary Magdalene and St. James, in which churches tablets commemorating the gift and the giver are conspicuously placed. Once a year, for now almost three hundred years, according to the terms of the will, "the Poorest, Oldest, most Honest and Impotent Poor" are assembled to hear a sermon, receive each his dole, and be reminded to thank God and the donor for the benefaction. As they receive only a shilling each, it is to be hoped the homily is not long. Despite the degrading conditions, regularly on St. Thomas's day the churches are thronged by applicants for the charity; and one of the wardens assured a kinsman of mine, some years since, that

it was "a blessing to the poor." As a descendant of the well-meaning Thomas, I am thankful for the warden's further assurance that the very old and infirm are excused from hearing the sermon, and get their gratuity without going to ask for it publicly.

The emigrant, Thomas, brought his wife and two sons to America; and a third son was born to him in Dorchester, Mass., where he first settled. He removed to New Haven in 1639, made voyages of traffic to Barbados, and finally went back to England, leaving his boys in New Haven, in the care of an unfaithful steward. The oldest of these sons, Thomas, is the ancestor of the New Haven family of Trowbridges. From the third son, James, I am descended.[1]

James returned to Dorchester, where his father

[1] The Trowbridge family derives its name from its ancient inheritance, Trowbridge, in the parish of Crediton, in Devonshire, where it resided for many centuries, and which was the property of Peter de Trowbridge in the reign of Edward the First. A younger branch of the family was settled in Taunton, in Somersetshire, as early as 1541. That nearly all the American Trowbridges are descended from this branch appears from the fact that whenever any of them are able to trace their ancestry back three or four generations, the line can nearly always be found in *The History of the Trowbridge Family*, published by Thomas R. Trowbridge, of New Haven, in 1872, a full and carefully prepared genealogy, to which I am chiefly indebted for these early data.

must have left some property to look after, and later settled in Cambridge Village (now Newton). He was the grandfather of Judge Edmund Trowbridge, the eminent jurist, and of Lydia Trowbridge, who married the rising young barrister, Richard Dana, and became the mother of an illustrious line. A brother of Edmund and Lydia was John Trowbridge, of Framingham, the father of Major John Trowbridge, who served in the Revolutionary War.

My father, Windsor Stone Trowbridge, grandson of Major John, was born in Framingham, where I found a sister of his still living, a gray-haired woman, when I first came to New England in 1848. She showed me the site of the home of their childhood, marked only by a ruined cellar overgrown with grass and weeds, — a scene full of suggestiveness to an impressible youth, going on such a pilgrimage, to seek some trace of his parent's early years.

When still quite young my father was taken by his parents to Oneida County, in Central New York, where, his mother dying, he was bound out to a Westmoreland farmer, John Townsend, with whom he lived until he was twenty-one, receiving, in return for his services, his board and clothing, a common-school education, and, on attaining his majority, a yoke of oxen and a hundred dollars in

money. The service could not have been unduly hard, for Mr. Townsend was a kind man, and he treated his ward in every respect as he did his own son, John, the boys being brought up together like two brothers. But there was a prejudice against such service, the hardships of which my father, in after years, sometimes endeavored to impress upon his own youngsters, when for our disobedience he would make the threat, "I 'll bind you out if you don't behave better!" — with a prodigious frown, which, however, did not frighten us, knowing well, as we did, how much easier it was for him, with his irritable temper and kind heart, to make a threat than it was to execute it.

My father and the younger John Townsend never forgot their early attachment, but remained good friends long after my father left Westmoreland for the Genesee country, as it was then called, farther west. I was named for that companion of his boyhood, who made us at least one visit in our backwoods home, — a visit impressed upon me by an interesting circumstance, although I was then but four years old. Mr. Townsend stood with his back to the fire, and taking from his pocket a silver half-dollar, gave it to me, as he remarked, "for my name." It was probably the first half-dollar piece I had ever seen, and I did not see

much of that. I don't remember just how it disappeared, but I have a distinct recollection of my father's saying he would give me a sheep for it, a proposition with which both the big and the little John Townsend were, I suppose, content. No doubt I thought it a fine thing to have a sheep all my own. There was, moreover, a condition attached to the transaction which I did not quite grasp at the time, but which was explained and well understood by me later. In that new country a farmer too poor to purchase sheep would sometimes take a small flock of a neighbor, with the obligation to return double the number at the end of four years. My father proposed to take my sheep on those terms ; it was still to be mine, but he was to have its wool and its progeny, and give me that sheep and another, or, at any rate, two sheep, on my eighth birthday. From that time it was understood that I was part owner of the flock. When I was six, I was told that I owned a sheep and a half; and in watching the flock I used to wonder which whole sheep was mine and which half of which other sheep I could properly claim. When I was eight, I was the proud proprietor of two sheep ; when I was twelve, my father continuing to hire sheep of me, I had four ; and I was then able to figure out the bewildering number I would have, at that rate, when I got to be as old

as he. At sixteen I had eight sheep; at seventeen I was entitled to ten; but then I left the homestead and the undivided flock, — a source of ever multiplying and illimitable riches, if there were anybody to account to me for the hundreds of thousands of sheep that should now be mine by that simple rule of increase. It was always my fault that I did not look closely after my material and, for that matter, my more ethereal interests. I kept John Townsend's worthy name, but his half-dollar, and the fortune founded upon it, vanished into air, into thin air, like so many of my early and late expectations.

II

That part of the Genesee country to which my father emigrated was the township of Ogden, in Monroe County, a few miles west of the river that gave the region its name. Soon after attaining his freedom he had married a Westmoreland farmer's daughter, Rebecca Willey (granddaughter of Captain John Willey, of East Haddam, Conn., a veteran of the Revolution), when she was eighteen and he twenty-one. They kept house about a year and a half in Westmoreland. Then, in the depth of winter, namely, in February, 1812, he yoked his oxen to a sleigh, on which were loaded a few farming and kitchen utensils and

household goods, — all it could safely carry in the condition of the road, if road it might be called, a mere wagon track cut through the primeval woods, — and set out with her upon their rough journey of over a hundred miles and I know not how many days. What is now Syracuse was then a frontier settlement; beyond that their way lay for the most part through the unbroken solitudes of the forest. There was no bridge over the Genesee, and but one house at the Falls, where the city of Rochester now stands. The emigrants expected to cross by a ferry at the mouth of the river, but they found the river frozen over, and the ferry-boat blocked. They put up at a log tavern, and crossing the next morning on the ice, pushed on into the vast and shadowy wilderness, my father walking by the horns of the oxen to navigate the sleigh among the projecting roots and through the snow-filled hollows; the bars of sunshine slanting along the arches of great trunks and limbs, and the tinkling ice crust dropping from the boughs overhead. They reached their destination that afternoon.

It was in the midst of dense woods, where a Westmoreland acquaintance had already made a small clearing and built a cabin. He took in the newcomers, and helped my father "roll up a house," — a mere hut, built of logs not too large

for two men to roll up on inclined poles, and place one upon another. The "puncheon" floor was of split chestnut logs, the sleigh boards serving as the floor of the loft. Not a nail was used in the construction; nails were expensive; wooden pegs took their place. No stones could be gathered on account of the deep snow, and my mother's kettles would sink down into the soft ground which formed the hearth. The snow stayed until April. When it was gone, and she went out and found some "good, nice stones" to set her kettles on in the fireplace, she "felt rich," as she used smilingly to tell us children in later years.

So my parents set up their simple housekeeping, and passed, I have no doubt, their happiest days, — days as happy, very likely, as any their children, or numerous grandchildren or great-grandchildren, have enjoyed in the stress of a more complex civilization. She sang at her work; his axe resounded in the forest. He made a clearing, and planted corn and beans and potatoes among the stumps. Their first child was born in that hut. The clearing grew, and before long a larger, well-built house replaced the primitive cabin.

This more substantial house had one large room on the ground floor, about twenty feet square, a low-roofed chamber, to which access was had by

a ladder, and in the course of time a "linter" (lean-to) addition. The linter was framed, but the main part was built of logs. These were hewed on the inside, and the cracks between them filled with a plaster made of clay. The filling was liable to crack, and it was necessary to patch the broken places every fall. This was called "chinking up the house," and it made a happy time for the older children, there being always some of the moist clay left over, which they could use in making cups and saucers and other ornaments for their playhouses. The floor was of dressed chestnut planks, the beautiful grain kept scrupulously clean and smoothly polished. At one end of the room was a huge stone fireplace, with great andirons, and heavy shovel and tongs in the corners. In the linter were the spare bed with its white counterpane, a tall brass-handled bureau, and our father's large oaken chest, with its complicated tills, always a marvel to the younger children, who would run and peep wonderingly whenever he went to open it.

The large room in the main part was kitchen, parlor, and bedroom all in one. Curtained off in one corner was the parents' bed, covered by a handsome pieced quilt, and pillow slips of fine homemade linen, with our mother's maiden initials fancifully stitched upon them in blue letters. The

curtains and pillow slips were a part of her wedding outfit, and had been woven for her by our Grandmother Willey. Under the bed was a trundle-bed, drawn out at night for the youngest children to sleep in, and pushed back by day, when all would be concealed from view by the drawn curtains. Each child passed from the mother's arms to that trundle-bed, which generally held two or three at a time; the older ones, as their successors came, being allowed — and it was accounted a proud privilege — to go "up chamber" to sleep. There was no pantry, cupboards serving instead. Outside the house was a large brick oven, where the family baking was done. It was under a shed, which was some protection to our mother when she had "a bad day for baking."

In this log house all the nine children were born except the first and the last. I was the eighth, and in it I first saw the light (that of a tallow candle) in September, 1827, after our parents had been fifteen years in their backwoods home.

III

The event, of so much more importance to me than to any one else, took place so nearly on the stroke of midnight that it was uncertain whether

BIRTHPLACE OF J. T. TROWBRIDGE

the 17th or 18th of the month should, in strict accordance with the fact, be set down as my birthday. In my childhood, some freedom of choice being left to me in the matter, — strange as it may seem that a boy should be able to choose his own birthday, — I stoutly maintained that the 17th was the anniversary, since it added the dignity of one day to my youthful years, and brought the presents, if there chanced to be any, one day earlier. But later in life, for a sadder reason, I fixed upon the date that made me a day younger. Then there was the satisfaction of feeling that I was a child of the morning. I had, however, cause to regret, even in my boyhood, that I did not put off my entrance upon the stage a few weeks longer, for then I could have enjoyed the distinction of being born in a new framed house, which the family moved into while I was yet in the cradle. But as it made not the slightest difference to me at the time, so now I am as well content as if my eyes had first blinked and my infant lungs piped in a palace.

The house in which my boyhood was passed, a two-story farmhouse painted white, with green blinds, stood, and I believe yet stands, on the north side of a road running east and west, a mile or more from the "Basin," as we used to call it, — Spencer's Basin, now Spencerport, on the Erie

Canal. This was the nearest village. It was a small village then, but it prides itself on being so much of a village now that friends of mine, living there, express surprise that I do not claim it as my birthplace, it is so much more distinctive! But I was not born in a village. Ogden includes Spencerport, and is distinctive enough for one so obscurely born and bred.

Behind the house was the well, with its iron-bound bucket; and not far beyond that was the fine orchard of apple and peach trees, which my father's hand had planted, and which were in their thrifty prime in the days of my childhood.

Beyond the barn and orchard were the rolling pastures, the grainfields where I hoed corn and pulled redroot, and the wood-lot, which had been spared when the forest was driven back to make space for farm land. Beyond the wood-lot was the canal, with its passing boats, in sight from the rear fences of our farm, but not near enough for us boys to be in very great danger of contamination from the generally rude and often vicious characters of the boatmen. This great waterway is only about two years older than I, having been completed in 1825. It was one of the delights of my boyhood. I went "in swimming" in it, on summer evenings; in the autumn I peddled nuts and apples on it, dropping from the bridges upon the

decks of passenger boats passing under. I skated on the frozen surface of the slack water in winter, and had on its banks many a boyish adventure.

Still beyond the canal, on the north, was Lake Ontario, not many miles away, but veiled from view by a skirt of the ancient wilderness. When I revisited the farm in later years, the distant woods had disappeared, and the lake was visible from the high pasture land over which I had driven the cows hundreds of times in the summers long gone by. As I recalled those summers on the pleasant hills, the feeling of glad surprise with which I looked off on the blue expanse was pierced by a pang of regret that that "thing of beauty" could not have been "a joy" of my barefoot boyhood.

Jessamine vines and morning-glories grew before the front windows, and in beds near by were all the old-fashioned flowers, of which the pink and the flower-de-luce were always my favorites. Roses I admired, and other flowers had their special charms, but I loved the pink, and something in the exquisite tint and velvety softness of the bosom of the flower-de-luce awakened in me a yearning no words could ever express. I remember when my sisters introduced into their garden a novelty known as the "love apple," prized for its beauty only, until it was popularized as the tomato, and banished to the vegetable garden.

In front of the house the ground fell in a gentle green slope to the road, on the other side of which, not many rods off, was an immense gloomy swamp, shaded by lofty elms that shut out the sun, and full of fallen trunks, rotten logs covered with moss as with coats of thick fur, and black, silent pools that to my childish imagination had a mysterious depth. Awe and wonder peopled for me those profound solitudes. By night raccoons whinnied and owls hooted in them, and at times clouds of mosquitoes came out of them. The roaring wind in the tossing sea of tops, the creaking of dry limbs, the fireflies fitfully embroidering, as with stars and threads of gold, the dark skirts of the swamp, and the bears and panthers and phantoms which I fancied inhabiting it, filled my childish soul with wonder and joy. There frogs held their concerts; and often, after a shower, when the wind was southerly, sulphurous odors were wafted to us from the troubled pools.

One would think our farmhouse must have been in an unhealthy place, but it was not so. We had no ague in our neighborhood, and there were probably no malarial mosquitoes in the swamp. The house stood on high ground, and our only protection against mosquitoes was a smudge-fire on summer nights.

There was a tradition among the boys that this

swamp was impassable, and I think I must have been nine or ten years old before I ventured to penetrate its dim recesses very far. Then, taking advantage of an unusually dry season, and marking the trees so that I could find my way back, I tramped and scrambled through it, and found to my surprise that it was only a belt of woods, with high and dry farm lands on the other side. I lost my awe of it from that day, and almost wished I had left it unexplored. I have since found many such dark and mysterious places in life, filled with shadowy terrors, until, with a little resolution, they have been passed through. When last I visited the old homestead, there was no black and dismal swamp in front of it, but a well-drained broad green meadow basking in the summer sun.

IV

The new house also had its great fireplace, and one of the pleasant recollections of my boyhood is the generous fire that on winter nights filled the room with its glow. The building of this fire was a somewhat elaborate affair. After the evening chores were done, my father would appear in the doorway with the big backlog coated with snow, often of ampler girth than himself, and fully breast high to him as he held it upright, canting it one way and another, and "walking" it before him on

its wedge-shaped end. He would perhaps stand it against the chimney while he took a breathing spell and planned his campaign. Then, the andirons hauled forward on the hearth, and the bed of half-burnt brands and live coals raked open, the icy log was got into the fireplace, where a skillful turn would lay it over, hissing and steaming, in its lair of hot embers. It seemed a thing alive, and its vehement sputtering and protesting made a dramatic moment for at least one small spectator. The stout shovel and tongs, or perhaps a piece of firewood used as a lever, would force it against the chimney back; then a good-sized stick, called a "back-stick," was laid on top of it, and the andirons were set in place. Across the andirons another good-sized stick was laid, called a "fore-stick," and in the interspace smaller sticks were crossed and thrust and piled, all quickly kindled by the live coals and brands.

In very cold weather a fire was kept burning all night, our father getting up once or twice to replenish it. Even in summer the coals rarely became extinct. A good heap of them, covered with embers at bedtime, would be found alive when raked open in the morning. This was a needful precaution before locofoco matches came into use. Every house had its tinder-box, but starting a flame with flint and steel was a tedious

process at the best, and "borrowing fire" was usual among neighbors when one had the mischance to lose his overnight. I am unable to say how long this custom continued, but I must have been seven or eight years old when a vagabondish neighbor came to our house one morning with his wife's foot-stove to get some coals. He was a reckless liar, of whom it was proverbially said that he would "lie for the fun of it" when the truth would have been more to his advantage. As we had had our breakfast, my mother said to him, "Your folks must have slept late this morning." "Bless you, no!" he replied; "we were up at daylight, and my wife has done a large ironing." I remember with what good-natured effrontery he joined in the laugh against him when my mother said she would like their receipt for doing an ironing without fire.

The foot-stove was a small sheet-iron box in a wooden frame, and with a perforated cover, made for holding a basin of live coals imbedded in ashes; it was used in cold weather to rest the feet on in the sleigh, or in the cold meeting-house. My mother always took hers to church with her from October until April. Between services, a fresh supply of coals was obtained at a house near by, for the afternoon.

The first friction matches I ever saw were

brought to school by a boy who lighted one by placing it in the folds of a piece of sandpaper and drawing it out with a quick pull. When we who stood looking on saw it come out actually on fire, our wonder and envy knew no bounds. No, sir! he would n't let one of us ignite or even touch one; he would light just one more himself, and only one, and we need n't tease, for those magical bits of wood were too precious to be wasted in idle experiments. It was n't long before everybody had matches, and a new era in household economy began.

Along with matches, stoves came into the settlement. A "Franklin" was set up in our kitchen, and the arched brick oven, that had been built into the chimney by the fireplace to supersede the primitive oven outside the house, was itself superseded. The tin "baker," in which meats were roasted before an open fire, also became obsolete. We still had open fires in the sitting-room, and sometimes in the "east room" (or parlor) when my sisters came to have beaux.

When I was seven years old, my eldest sister, Venilia, married one of these beaux, a young Vermonter, who had taught our district school and made her acquaintance while boarding around. I do not recall the wedding ceremony, but I remember well the beautifully frosted wedding-cake,

served to a large company grouped before our sitting-room fire. It was winter, and not long after, namely, in February, 1835, the young couple emigrated to "the West," as our father and mother had done just twenty-three years before.

The "West" in this instance was Illinois. The day of their departure remains vividly impressed in my memory. There was snow on the ground, but instead of a sleigh and oxen a large emigrant wagon drawn by horses was brought to the door. The tearful adieux were said (I wondered why my mother and sisters cried so), and the great slow wagon rolled away, the wheels clogging with the damp snow (I can still see them), and the white canvas top soon disappearing over the hill; before it, a pilgrimage of near six hundred miles! It was a much longer but not rougher journey than that of our parents, which in some respects it resembled. As our father and mother had found the ferryboat blocked by ice at the mouth of the Genesee, so the later emigrants arrived at the Detroit River when it was closed over by a "cold snap" in the month of March. My brother-in-law would not risk crossing with his young wife in the loaded wagon, but took her over first, in a light cutter, running at the horse's head, to insure safety with speed; the tough, thin ice undulating under the gliding runners. Afterwards,

by dividing his load, he got all over without accident. They were almost a month in reaching the head of Lake Michigan, near which a cluster of houses around a fort, on a dismal flat, marked the spot where the miracle of a mighty city was so soon to rise. They could now congratulate themselves on being near their journey's end — only twenty-five miles farther to go! But, crossing the vast plain over which Chicago now spreads, they found it a seemingly endless waste of melting snow and slush, almost knee-deep to the team; then, for the first time, my sister lost heart and cried. Was that the beautiful prairie land of which they had heard so much, and where they were going to pass their lives? But hope rose again when they crossed the Des Plaines and came into the grove-girt, rolling prairie country, where their new home was to be, in a land of flowers and wide horizons.

V

Not even the all-night fires could keep our house warm in very cold weather. After my older brother and I had been promoted from the trundle-bed (which went with us from the old house into the new), we slept in an unfinished corner of the chamber that must have had an arctic temperature on many a winter night. The bare rafters and

rough roof boards sloped down over our bed, the wind whistled around the gable and perhaps rattled a loose shingle, and sometimes on stormy nights a fine snow sifted down insidiously, spraying ever so softly any part of nose or cheek or ear tip left peeping out from under the bedclothes. It was not an uncommon thing to find a little white heap or two, mere fairy snowdrifts, on the spread in the morning. Oh, but how we slept! And what brisk fun it was, jumping out of bed in the stinging cold of the wintry dawn, to catch up our clothes and scamper downstairs with them, to dress before the crackling fire! The only serious discomfort of those nights, that haunts my memory, was waking up, and perhaps lying awake, with cold feet. To remedy that, my brother and I used to run out into the snow barefoot, just before going to bed. The excruciating ache caused by this heroic treatment reacted in a glow that would commonly last all night.

In the course of time our corner of the attic was done off and we had a white-plastered room to sleep in and keep our chests in, like the rooms our sisters occupied in the other end of the house. But there was an "under the eaves" part that always remained unfinished. That, in my earliest years, was the lurking place of phantoms; and there was a den of impish creatures behind the

great chimney. My father belonged to the militia, and had been called out to resist a threatened landing of the British at the mouth of the Genesee, in the war of 1812. The musket he had carried in that bloodless expedition leaned at the mouth of the den; no mere inanimate stock and barrel, but a dumb sentinel, conscious of the mysteries it guarded, and ready day and night to do its solemn duty. It kept a very special lookout for small boys. How real a thing it was to me, in that unfriendly character, may be inferred from a naive reply I made when one of my sisters asked why I always shied in passing near that corner. I said, "I 'm afraid the old musket will snap at me!" I had seen my father take it down and try the old flint lock, and had marveled at his temerity.

I never had a good look at one of the impish creatures, but I knew just what they were like. They had no bodies, nor much in the way of heads, for that matter, their faces being set flat on their little straight legs, like the tops of milking-stools. But they were only about one half or one quarter the size of milking-stools. Neither had I ever really heard them, but the certainty that they pattered off on their little legs when they saw me coming, and then chuckled and whispered and leered, away back in their black hole, could n't have been whipped out of me.

Among the heirlooms which time had stranded in our unfinished attic were some weaving-frames, cards for carding wool, a hackle, and our grandmother Willey's small flax spinning-wheel, all which had gone out of use. As long ago as I can remember, the unsold wool from our flock was no longer carded by hand, but was sent to a factory, from which it came back in the form of beautiful white rolls, to be spun by the mother and sisters, on the big spinning-wheel downstairs. The spun yarn went again to the mill, where it was woven and dyed, and came home "fulled cloth," to be cut up into garments, fitted and stitched and pressed by our mother's own hand.

VI

The world was all a mystery to me, which I was forever seeking to solve; but the greatest mystery of all was that of the people around me. I can hardly remember a time when I did not try to enter somehow into their consciousness and think with their thoughts. I would sit patiently in my little chair, and watch my mother rocking and knitting, something within me yearning to fathom something in her; wondering how it seemed to be as old as she, how life looked to her, and what it was that made her chair rock and her hands move, always just so, and not otherwise. When I was

old enough to be taken to meeting, I would entertain myself by studying certain persons whose faces fascinated me, endeavoring to guess their secrets, and to make out why one was gray and wrinkled, another young and handsome, and why one was always so distinctly one's own self and not another's. I knew they never had any such thoughts as troubled a little boy like me, but what *were* their thoughts ?

At times it seemed to me that while the people and things around me might be real, I was a sort of dream. Then they were the dream, and I was the sole reality ; even my own father and mother and brothers and sisters were phantoms, and the earth and trees and clouds were pictures, provided for my use and entertainment. These flittings across my inner consciousness would hardly reach the surface of my thoughts ; if ever they did, I was sensible enough to perceive that they were the idlest illusions, and I early outgrew them.

But the feeling that everything was provided and prearranged for me was more persistent. Invisible beings surrounded and watched over me, and shaped the world and all things for my good. They knew all that I did or thought or felt ; they were so near and so real that I sometimes talked to them, and was sure they whispered to me, though I could never quite make out what they

said. This belief — if anything so formless and unreasoned can be called a belief — was wholly instinctive, and could not have been suggested by, as it probably antedated, any teaching I received regarding God and the angels. God, according to my earliest conception, was a big man, taller than our well-sweep; and angels were great white things with wings. My invisibles had nothing so tangible as wings, and were as bodiless as the breeze that brushed my hair. The sense of their immediate presence became gradually obscured; but even after I was old enough to argue myself out of it, I never quite lost the feeling of their oversight and guidance, — the feeling which I have elsewhere commemorated, attempting to define what is so indefinable: —

> "The haunting faith, the shadowy superstition,
> That I was somehow chosen, the special care
> Of Powers that led me through life's changeful vision,
> Spirits and influences of earth and air."

Problems which have baffled the greatest minds oppressed me at a very early age. I can remember lying on my back under an orchard tree, when I could n't have been more than eight or nine years old, gazing up through the boughs into the blue depths of the sky, and trying to think of time and space, until my inmost sense ached with the effort. It was the beginning of time that troubled

me, for it must have had a beginning; and yet — what was before that? And there must be a limit to the sky; but when I conceived of that limit as a great blank wall, no matter how far away, the same difficulty met me, — what was beyond that wall? My older brother seemed never to have thought of such things, and hardly to know what I meant when I spoke of them. I could never be satisfied with my mother's answer when I carried my questions to her, — "Those are things nobody can understand," — and I wondered how it could satisfy her. It was no explanation to say that God made the world, unless somebody could tell me who made God, or how he made himself, and what was before God was.

VII

I was brought up under the shadow of the Calvinism of those days, and listened to its preachings and teachings, sitting in the straight-backed pew of the meeting-house or on a bench of the Sunday-school. Sunday was a day of irksome restraint and gloom. It began at sundown on Saturday, and ended at sundown on Sunday, and sometimes a little earlier for us boys, if the afternoon chanced to be overcast, and we could persuade our mother that it was time to relieve the pressure and let our youthful spirits effervesce. Fortunately she

was more liberal than her creed, and although anything like games or sports was prohibited in the hours that were to be kept "holy," and a certain amount of serious reading was enjoined, we generally had the freedom of the barn and fields and orchard before and after church. No work was performed except the necessary chores.

Church-going was rigidly observed. Our meeting-house was at Ogden Centre, a mile away as the crows flew when they flew straight; it was considerably farther around by the road. Every Sunday morning the one-horse wagon was brought to the door about the time the ringing of the first bell sent its loud *bim-bom* over the woods and farms and into our hearts, with all its solemn associations. The mother, in her best black gown, and with her foot-stove, if the weather was cold, the father, freshly shaved, in his high black stock and equally uncomfortable tall black hat, and such of the sisters as were at home, filled the two broad seats, with perhaps one of us youngsters wedged in, though we preferred to walk in good weather; then the vehicle moved out of the front gate, and joined the procession of wagons going in the same direction, impelled by the same pious duty. With the foot-stove or without it went luncheons for the noonday hour, for the religious exercises were an all-day affair, with forenoon and afternoon ser-

vices, and the Bible-class and Sunday-school in the interval which the minister took for rest between his sermons. It was not supposed that his hearers needed rest. There were sheds for the vehicles, and the man who was kind to his beasts usually put into his wagon with the family sandwiches a small bag of grain for his team. The services began at half past ten, and were over at half past two, unless the afternoon sermon was "lengthy," as it was very apt to be: four hours of doctrine and edification on which Heaven was supposed to smile; four hours of light and sunshine and recreation stricken out of our lives on that so-called day of rest.

I can remember how utterly vacuous I felt, in both mind and body, at the end of that exhausting ordeal. Often one of the family would remain at home, to take care of the house, and of my younger brother, five years my junior, before he was old enough to be subjected to that long confinement. Happy the day and blissful the chance when that care-taking was assigned to me. I was never lonely when left alone, yet I was always glad when I saw the dust and heard the rumble of vehicles coming home from meeting. I knew how hungry everybody would be, and never failed to have the pot and kettle boiling.

My mother was a woman of strong devotional

feelings, and with an unquestioning faith in a divine Providence and in immortality. She no more doubted that eternal life awaited her in the blissful society of friends she had known here than that she should awaken in the morning after a normal night's sleep. This belief seemed inherent in her, and she loved to dwell upon it. The doctrines of total depravity and eternal torment she accepted on the authority of her church; but that they were external to her spiritual nature I am convinced, for the reason that she never insisted upon them, nor even mentioned them, as I now recall, in her endeavors to impress upon us younger children the necessity for a "change of heart." Three of my sisters became church members in their girlhood. I think my older brother also joined the church; if he did, he became a backslider. He got "converted" in the tremendous excitement of revival meetings, but in him the exuberance of unreflecting animal spirits did not permit the religious feeling to strike permanent root.

My father was a constant church-goer, and he at one time led the choir. He never became a communicant, not because he had leanings toward skepticism, but because he had not consciously "experienced religion." If right living constitutes righteousness, there was no more righteous man in

the church than he was out of it. But he had not met with the change of heart which was deemed essential to an admission to its fold. He was at times persuaded by our mother to conduct family worship, but he lacked the gift of prayer in which she abounded; and I recall painful occasions when, as we all knelt at our chairs, he broke down in his supplication, becoming stranded, so to speak, with his burden; whereupon she would sail in and take it up, and on a full tide of eloquence bear it into port.

I had something of my mother's natural religious feeling, yet not all the pains of perdition preached by imported revivalists — which, in the dim candle-light, amid the misty exhalations, the sobbings and moanings, of the evening meetings, frightened my mates and acquaintances into seeking the "anxious seat" — could terrify me into following their example. Something granitic within me resisted all such influences. Whatever intelligence and spiritual perception I had revolted against the threatenings hurled down upon us by those pulpit prophets of wrath, and I sat cold and critical, at times even cynical, I fear, when the exhorters shouted, and some of the worst boys I knew, recently convicted of sin, got hold of me and implored me to come forward, be prayed for, and gain a hope.

I prayed by myself, frequently aloud, when I was walking alone in the fields; prayed earnestly that the truth might be shown to me, opening my heart to it like a flower to the light, and making vows to follow wherever it led, to live by it and confess it, at whatever cost. I remember doing this when I was about twelve years old. But the more I thought of the fall of man, total depravity, the scheme of redemption, and kindred tenets, the more strongly they impressed me as being unnatural, and humanly contrived. Once I became angry with a sled I was making, the pieces of which would not fit according to my plan. I gave it a vindictive kick. Then I checked myself and said, "That 's like what they say God did when he made the world and found it did n't suit him." I was calmed and shamed, and at once set about putting the pieces together.

I was always wondering at the beauty and mystery of the earth and sky, — the air in its place, the water in its place, the birds adapted to their life, the fishes to theirs, the growth of trees and grass and flowers, the sun by day, and by night the moon and stars; and I never once imagined that these visible miracles could have come about by any sort of chance. I had a vague conception of a law of adaptation in nature, some power that kept the balance of things, which in later

years the theories of evolution and the survival of the fittest tended to confirm and explain. I clung intuitively to a belief in divine Providence and an intelligent Source of Life; not in consequence of the religious instructions I received, but rather in spite of them. I say in spite of them, because I regard those preachings and teachings as having been distinctly harmful to me in many ways. They cast a shadow over my childhood, and enshrouded in baleful gloom even the Sun of Righteousness. It was not until long after I got away from them that I came back to the Bible with a fresh sense of the beauty of its literature, and of the spiritual insight and power that illumine the best parts of it, and make it, above all other books, the Word of God.

VIII

With her strong devotional feelings and a sensitive temperament, my mother possessed great energy of character. She had taught school in her girlhood, and was always ambitious of giving her own children a good education. We all had what the district school could afford; and it was chiefly owing to her strong determination that my two younger sisters were sent to "select schools" at Rochester and Spencer's Basin. Our father did not oppose their going, but the family means

were limited, and he would often say that he "could n't see where the money was to come from" to provide things which her rigid economy rendered possible. By the exercise of that and by managing the "butter and cheese money," of which she had the control, she contrived to send the girls away to school. Once when I was at home sick with a cold, and was supposed to be asleep on the lounge, I heard her say to my father that she wanted enough of the wheat and wool money saved to "educate John with;" to which he replied, "What good will it ever do him?" Yet I knew that he was as proud as she was of what they had heard of my progress in my studies, and as desirous of doing for me all their circumstances would allow. From many a task I was saved because I was seen with a book in my hand.

My father had almost too delicate a constitution for the life of hard labor to which he was born. He had a talent for music, of which he was passionately fond, and which he used to teach in the early pioneer days. I can remember seeing him so much affected by the singing of the country choir in the old meeting-house, during which part of the service it was customary for the congregation to stand, that he was obliged to sit down, overcome by his emotions. I might not have guessed what the trouble was, but for our mother

saying to him after meeting that she should think he might control his feelings a little better; she did n't consider the singing anything so very fine. "Maybe not," he replied. "But it brings up something — I can't tell what!" And his voice choked with the recollection. One of the satisfactions of his life was the Sunday evening gathering in our sitting room, when neighbors would sometimes come in and unite with him and my sisters (one of whom had an unusually good voice) in singing the old fashioned hymns.

He had an irritable temper, but he was a kind and indulgent parent, and in my childhood I was fonder of him than of anybody else in the world, even our mother. When he sat down with us in the evening, I liked to climb upon his knees, put my arms around his neck, and have him "baird" me, that is, rub his beard of two or three days' growth against my cheek, while I hugged him affectionately. Our mother undoubtedly had as deep and sincere a love for us, and would perhaps have done even more for us than he, but somehow I never got quite so near to her heart as I did to his. She was far more strict than he, in the discipline of us children; fortunately for us, no doubt, although I certainly did not think so at the time. More than once when she was about to punish me for some offense, he would exclaim,

"I 'll attend to him!" — take me sternly by the collar, lead me out into the orchard, cut a very small switch, give me two or three very light strokes with it across my back, then say, in the lovingest tones, "There! now be a good boy, and mind your mother!" On my return to the house she would ask, "Well! did he whip you?" With hypocritical woe in my features, I would falter, "Yes!" at which her just remark would very likely be, "I don't believe he half punished you! I 've a good mind to punish you over again!" But I don't remember that she ever did.

He early instilled into us a detestation of dishonest practices and of the shirking of obligations; and was himself ever a model of upright conduct and neighborly dealing. He was consulted by many persons in common matters of business, and strangers came from long distances to get his opinion of horses, for which he had a great love, and of which he had an intuitive knowledge. For nearly twenty years he was collector of the town taxes, an office that gave him a pleasant occupation in winter, and opportunities for meeting all sorts of people, in his all-day rides.

During all that time he was also a town constable, and served many a writ. But he was a peacemaker, caring more for the promotion of right and good will than for securing a fee. I well

remember his advice to an angry man who once came with a summons for him to serve: "You 're foolish to sue! Go and talk it over with him in a neighborly spirit, and meet him halfway. Don't rush into a lawsuit."

He had a horror of debt, being perhaps over cautious in that regard. He took up originally only forty acres of land, but he might have had four or five times as much if he had been willing to borrow money to pay for it. For ten acres additional he afterwards paid more than three or four hundred would have cost, at the government price. "I would do just so again," he would say. "I 've seen too much of the wreck and ruin caused by debt." He no doubt had in mind an instance which had come very near to him and my mother. My grandfather, Alfred Willey, had been a well-to-do farmer in Westmoreland, and had lost all his property by becoming security for a friend, — "House and home, everything, even to the old grindstone, just by signing his name!" as my mother used to say, in speaking of the family disaster.

My father had an inexhaustible fund of good stories, which he would tell one after another as long as he had listeners, commonly linking them together with "That puts me in mind," or "That reminds me again." I can see him now, in his favorite attitude on a winter's evening, after light-

ing his pipe with a coal, standing with his back to the fire, a pitcher of cider warming beside him on the hearth, and his face in a genial glow, while he exercised his powers of humorous mimicry, to the amusement of us children and any guests that had dropped in.

IX

After my grandfather Willey lost his Westmoreland property by "signing his name," he moved with his family to Ogden, where he died when I was two years and nine months old. It was my first sight and knowledge of death, and I remember how bewildered I was by it. I asked why they "put grandpa in that cradle." I could n't have been present at the burial, but it must have been explained to me, for the gloom of it left upon me a life-long impression. I recollect riding with my parents at twilight, sitting in my little chair between their feet in the wagon, and asking mournfully, at every lonesome-looking spot we passed, "Is this where grandpa was buried?" It was as if nobody had ever died before, and somebody should have prevented so dreadful a thing happening to my good grandpa.[1]

[1] I recall only one other circumstance of as early an ascertained date. This was a tremendous hailstorm that occurred one Sunday in June of the same year (1830), when all the win-

After her husband's death my grandmother Willey lived with her married sons and daughters, with all of whom she was in a manner welcome; yet her presence was a cloud under whatever roof. The loss of the Westmoreland home was but one of many misfortunes that saddened her later years. After the removal to Ogden she had broken her ankle by falling with her horse on a rough backwoods road, the bones had been badly set, and she walked on the side of her foot, limping painfully with a cane. In her younger days she had been a woman of remarkable vigor and courage, and had once made a horseback journey from Westmoreland to her old home in East Haddam, Ct., carrying all the way thither and back a two-year-old child before her on the saddle. Unfortunately she did not have the religious faith which her daughter, my mother, enjoyed, to sustain her in her afflictions; and her complaints were wearisome to hear. She must have been a sore trial to our parents, but I believe they made the best of it, and I think my older sisters understood and commiserated her condition; but to us

dow panes on two sides of the house were shattered. To get me out of the way of the terror and danger of it, my mother put me on her bed, from which I watched her stepping cautiously around with a broom, sweeping the hailstones and broken glass into a heap on the hearth; a scene as vivid in my memory to-day as anything in my life that has happened since.

boys her coming was portentous of storm and her going an occasion of glee. I may have owed to her the suggestion of Grandmother Rigglesty, in Neighbor Jackwood, but it was not at all her portrait that I sketched in that aggressively unamiable character. After I was old enough to appreciate her truly admirable traits and the nature of the calamities that had broken her, I felt remorse for my childish uncharitableness towards her, and have always wished that I might atone for it by a kind word in her memory. She died in the home of a daughter in Illinois. I never saw her after I was about nine years old.

X

It was always a great event in my boyhood when my father would take me with him to Rochester, especially if I could be indulged with a sight of the Falls, and hear once more the story of Sam Patch's fatal jump. After about my eleventh year that marvel of nature became associated in my mind with a yet more tragically impressive circumstance. A cousin of mine, a young married woman, living in Rochester on a bank of the Genesee, went one winter day to fill a pail at the water's edge, and never returned. When search was made for her, the marks of her fingers were seen on the snow-crusted brink, where she had

evidently slipped and fallen into the river, and struggled in vain to get out. The finger-marks were traced for two or three rods in the direction in which the current had swept her on, then they disappeared. It was four or five days before her drowned body was recovered, off the lake shore, near the mouth of the river. From that time I could never behold the falls without picturing the poor girl's horror and fear as she felt her numbed and wounded fingers slipping from the icy crust, and saw herself borne by the wild rapids to inevitable death in the plunging cataract and boiling gulf below.

XI

Our district schoolhouse was at a crossing of the roads half a mile or less east of our home. It was of red brick, its walls were cracked, and kept from falling asunder by iron rods passing completely through, at a convenient height for boys to jump up to, and catch, and perform gymnastic feats on, in the dingy old entry, at recess. Grotesque methods of enforcing discipline among the pupils were in vogue in those days, — "sitting on nothing," with the back against the wall; "holding down a nail in the floor," with a forefinger, in a painfully stooping posture; standing with an arm outstretched and a pile of books in the hand;

"licking jackets," when two boys who had quarreled received from the master each a stout switch, and were made to fight out their feud in the presence of the edified school, he himself putting in a cut for example when they were too tender of each other and did not hit hard enough. The school was ungraded and the methods of teaching were primitive, but there is this to be said of it, that the pupil that had a mind for self-improvement could get a fair common-school education under the worst teachers, and that some of these were far better than the system they represented.

At school or elsewhere I was by disposition the least quarrelsome of boys. But I was quick in my resentments, and liked to pay all debts promptly. If I suffered a blow, my unregenerate notion was that the next belonged to the other fellow's cheek, not to mine, and that when such things were passing, it was better to give than to receive. Deep down in my heart I abominate warfare, among boys, or men, or nations; and believe in the coming time when mutual good-will, forbearance, and the love of righteousness will usher in a reign of peace. Boys are nearer the primitive man than we their elders are; there must be individual growth to correspond with racial progress, before the so-called natural depravity of wild beast traits, developed in the struggle

for existence, is redeemed in them by the spirit of love, or transformed into power, in safer conditions. The wild apple-tree sprout bears thorns that disappear from the robust stem. A boy may be so well born that he will pass through the world without conflict, with no defense but his wise, sweet, gentle nature. But such are rare; and, for my part, I prefer that one should stand up for his honor and his right, even to the extent of fighting for them, rather than yield to wrong because he is a milksop.

As I look back now, there seem to have been two boys in me; one the truly gentle boy, shrinking from contact with the ruder sort, and yearning for trustful and loving comradeship; the other a dormant but too easily roused cave-dweller. The savage came uppermost in two or three minor battles with schoolmates, and in one furious fight with a strange boy I had the ill fortune to encounter at a militia muster, — a performance that caused me infinite humiliation at the time, on account of its publicity, but which I look back upon now without compunction, since it was undertaken in defense of a younger companion.

XII

I was only an average pupil until about my fifteenth year, when a slight thing gave my mind

a start. In what was called the "back part of the spelling-book" there was a list of foreign words and phrases with their English equivalents affixed. We had not been required to learn these, and perhaps they interested me the more for this reason. I went through them eagerly, committed them to memory, and conceived an ardent desire to study a foreign language.

I wished to have some necessary books bought for me, but money for such things was scarce in our family, and no doubt my parents thought it better that I should confine myself to studies that were taught in school. An invalid cousin of mine, a young lady who had had a boarding-school education, heard of my ambition, and on her deathbed directed that her French books should be given to me. There were only three of these, — a grammar of the old-fashioned sort, a small dictionary, and a reader, — but I never in my life felt richer than when the precious volumes were brought home and put into my hands.

It was probably all the better for my mental discipline that the language was not made easy to me by our more modern methods. Yet I did not find it hard; there was a joy in acquiring it which made a pastime of the dry conjugations and of the slow process of reading with the help of a dictionary.

I did not find much difficulty with anything but the pronunciation. The textbooks gave me little help in that, and after the death of my cousin I did not know anybody who had the slightest acquaintance with the language. I went through the grammar and reader, and a Télémaque which I found in the town library, and so got to read and translate the language before I ever heard it spoken.

I took other books from the library, which was supported by subscribers, of whom my father was one.[1] I read Ivanhoe with wonder and delight, and in consequence of the historical curiosity it excited in me, took out next an abridged Hume's History of England. I read Cooper's Spy and

[1] In a letter written for the centennial celebration of the settlement of Ogden, August 7, 1902, I said of this library: "I dare not now attempt to tell how much I owe to that small but well-chosen collection of books — how the common world was transformed for me by the poets and romancers that smiled on me from those obscure shelves! It was surely a colony of enlightened and public-spirited settlers who, as soon as food and shelter were secured, there in the heart of the wilderness, added to the rude life they hewed out of it life's inestimable ornament, literature. Ogden doubtless has a vastly more comprehensive and attractive library to-day; but the value of such an institution depends, after all, upon what we ourselves bring to it; and it is well to remember that the few books that nourish vitally the eager mind are better than richly furnished alcoves amid which we browse languidly and loiter with indifference."

Leather Stocking Tales, James's Richelieu and Henri Quatre, Croly's Salathiel, and Ingraham's Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf, and thought them all good.

I read Byron with the greatest avidity, and became possessed of a copy of Scott's Lady of the Lake, whole pages of which — I might almost say whole cantos — I was soon able to recite from memory. I was even absorbed in Pope's Essay on Man, regarding it as the most perfect combination possible of sublime philosophy and lucid verse. I read much of Shakespeare, and tried to read more. Othello, King Lear, The Tempest, Hamlet, Timon of Athens, and a few other plays interested me profoundly; but I could not get through Love's Labour 's Lost. As I look back now, I am surprised at the boyish audacity with which I criticised works so famous. The indecencies and whimsical conceits I found in the plays offended my taste, and I thought the tragical ending of Hamlet too melodramatic, although I did not have that word for what I felt to be forced and artificial in that homicidal scene. The rhymed endings of heroic blank-verse speeches made my heart sink.

I went through a volume of Plutarch because I liked it, and Rollin's Ancient History because I thought it one of those things a well-informed

youth ought not to neglect. A similar sense of duty carried me over dreary tracts of Aiken's British Poets, which I blamed myself for finding dull, and Pope's Homer, which I thought I ought to like for the reason that Homer and Pope were both celebrated poets. But the couplets that I found so cogent and convincing in the Essay on Man became monotonous in the Iliad, and left me unmoved. Of other books I remember reading at that age, I may mention Abercrombie's Intellectual Powers, Blair's Rhetoric, some volumes of the Spectator, the Arabian Nights and Gulliver's Travels, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding (abridged edition), works on Phrenology and Physiology, Paradise Lost, and the Pirate's Own Book. When I had money of my own I purchased books in Rochester, among others some volumes of a Bibliothèque Choisie de la Littérature Française, of which I best recall Alfred de Vigny's fine historical romance, Cinq-Mars. I procured Latin textbooks, and took up the study of that language, also without a teacher.

Up to the time of my intellectual awakening, I had scarcely any clear conception of the use and meaning of English grammar, although I could parse fluently and recite all the rules. The study of another language threw a flood of light on the grammar of my own, like a lantern shining back-

ward on a path one has been treading in the dark. My mind also awoke to the real value of other branches, of which only a parrot-like knowledge had been required of me hitherto. And "composition" became a delight.

XIII

I began to write verses when I was thirteen, but I was accused by some of my mates of copying them out of books, until I composed an acrostic on the name of one of them. As it was a name Mrs. Hemans and Kirke White would hardly have cared to celebrate, even if they had heard of it, and as the ingenuity of altering any of their lines to suit it would have been considerable, the charge of plagiarizing was not pressed.

After I was thirteen I attended only the winter term of the school, my services being required on the farm in summer; but the teaching I missed was probably no loss to me when my mind had become independently aroused. In the hour's nooning with the books I loved, I have no doubt but I learned more than I should have done in the whole day's routine in school. I almost wonder now at the extent of my studies and readings while I was doing a boy's regular work on the farm. I was fond of sport, and liked to hunt and fish and play ball and fly kites as well as most

boys. But I made a good deal of "odd spells" which others idled away. The men of learning and genius I read about, or whose writings I admired, caused in me pangs of despairing emulation, as I constantly contrasted their high achievements with my own petty, unprofitable life.

It was not alone the love of study that kept me at my books. I saw my companions give themselves up to idle talk and amusement, and often wished that I might pass my days as carelessly as they. What was that inward scourge which chastised those shallower inclinations, and drove me back to my self-allotted tasks? Many times I asked myself this question. I did not know then how much may be acquired in the course of a year by a boy engaged in almost any kind of work, who gives now and then a leisure hour to earnest reading and study without a teacher; but I was finding it out by experience.

I was in many respects fortunately situated, although I did not know it at the time. I thought it hard that I could not have the educational privileges which some boys at the Basin had, and which they scorned and wasted. I had a cousin on the Willey side living in Geneseo, where I visited him. His father was a lawyer, and the son had all the advantages of an academic course, and of a village life, simple enough, in fact, but

cultured and elegant in comparison with my own. He was two or three years older than I, so learned that I hardly dared speak to him of my humble studies, and so well dressed that I was ashamed of my country clothes, as I knew he was, when his Geneseo friends saw him with me on the street. His position and accomplishments were so far beyond anything I could hope ever to attain that I went home with a very poor opinion of my opportunities, and might have been discouraged from my endeavors at self-improvement if I had not pursued it for its own sake, or if something within me deeper than discouragement and better than ambition had not held me to my purpose. I was naturally indolent, and it was probably well for me that, instead of circumstances made easy for me, I had obstacles to overcome.

My father never drove his boys or his hired men. I generally had a good part of a rainy day to myself, and often afternoons, when work was not pressing. I nearly always had a book handy which I could snatch up between whiles. I fear this habit was a source of annoyance to the family, and I can remember hearing the frequent question, "Where 's John?" answered with tart impatience, "Oh, he 's got his nose in one of his everlasting books somewhere!" I am sorry to say I did not always take my nose out as soon as

I should have done. My ambition did not invariably receive that encouragement from other members of the family which could have been desired. I was painfully impressed by what one of my sisters, five years older than I, once said of precocious boys, who know more at fourteen or fifteen than they ever do afterwards, adding, "I guess that is going to be the way with John." I don't suppose that this was really her opinion, but it was natural to think that any branching conceit in a younger brother should be kept well pruned. Not that I ever made a parade of my acquirements. I often wished that my reputation for reading and study had been less, in order that less might have been expected of me. I knew a little of so many things that I was credited with knowing many more, my ignorance of which was often a source of embarrassment and humiliation.

XIV

This studiousness on my part developed in me an independence of social excitements and a reliance on my own inward resources, as appeared in the way I spent the Fourth of July when I was fifteen years old. While every other boy in the town went to the "celebration," I remained at home, entirely alone, with no company but my books and my own thoughts. When I was tired

of reading — for I had weak eyes, and could never use them long at a time — I went out into the field and hoed corn for an hour or two, an altogether voluntary task. Then I went back to my book and my frugal dinner which I prepared myself and ate while I read; then returned and hoed corn for another hour in the afternoon. The exercise refreshed me for the reading, and the reading made the open air and the sunshine and the society of cawing crows and wild hawks, sailing over, a renewed delight. I think it was the happiest Fourth of July of my boyhood; and I did not envy my brothers the uproarious fun they had to tell of when they came home at night. To spend an entire day in work seemed to me a wicked waste of time and opportunity; but to break it up with intervals of reading and study, in this way, was my ideal of a farm-boy's life.

In the way of literature everything was grist that came to my mill. I even have an affectionate recollection of two or three old-fashioned schoolbooks. The Historical Reader had a new interest for me after I had read Ivanhoe, and it was the selections from Milton and Shakespeare in Porter's Rhetorical Reader that sent me to Paradise Lost and Hamlet. The brief extracts from the poets in Goold Brown's Grammar had for me an indefinable charm.

I was not particularly good in arithmetic, but algebra appealed powerfully to my understanding, and I had great pleasure in it. This I studied in school when I was fifteen and sixteen.

One of my sisters had a copy of Burritt's Astronomy and Geography of the Heavens, which I studied by myself, tracing out the principal constellations visible in our latitude, and learning pretty thoroughly all that was then popularly taught concerning the stars and the solar system. This was welcome food to my reason and imagination.

I was not, however, so bookish a boy as this condensed and continuous account of my studies may seem to imply. They were for the most part done at odd spells, the summer's farm work, the night and morning chores in winter, sports and social recreations occupying always the greater part of my time.

The weakness of the eyes I have mentioned was another hindrance. There was no trouble with the sight, and my mother used to say that they were as strong as any child's until I had the measles, which left them irritable and with a tendency to chronic inflammation. When I was twelve years old, I was sent to Dr. Munn, an oculist of some note, in Rochester, to have my eyes examined. He said there was nothing the matter

with them but a slight congestion, which could be quickly remedied. I said that was what I had come for, and submitted to his treatment. He called an attendant to hold my head on the pad of the chair, and proceeded to pass a short curved lancet around each eyeball, between it and the lids, as coolly and with as little regard for my outcries as if he had been peeling onions. I was in his chair five minutes, and his fee was five dollars. As I had expected nothing more than a prescription, I had only a two-dollar note with me. He took the money from my pocketbook, which I blindly handed him, bound my handkerchief on my bleeding orbs, saying they would be all right in a day or two, and sent me home by the neighbor who had brought me, and who had witnessed the treatment, as much surprised at it as I was. I should n't have regretted the pain, intense as it was, if any good had come of it ; but it was weeks before my eyes fully recovered from that worse than useless operation. It may have done them no permanent harm, but it certainly did them no good. The irritability remained, always easily aggravated by over-use of the eyes, a cold, or much exposure to artificial light. And it has continued, a very serious inconvenience, through all my life, interfering with my literary labors, often causing me to shun society and evening entertain-

ments, and so, unfortunately, tending to confirm in me a natural inclination toward retirement and reverie.

XV

Although not the most useful lad on a farm, I liked certain kinds of farm work very well. Ploughing was my favorite employment. I drove the team with the lines passed over my back and under one arm, and at fifteen turned a furrow, my father said, as well as any man. In those lonely but pleasant hours in the field, with no companions but the kind, dumb, steady-going horses, I made a great many verses, which I retained in my memory and wrote down after the day's work was done.

Tales and romances in rhyme, after the manner of Byron and Scott, I planned and partly composed in this way. It may be in consequence of the habit thus formed that few of the many verses I have written since have been composed with pen in hand. They have oftener come to me when I have been walking in the woods and fields, or by the waterside, or lying awake in the dark.

I was lying thus awake when I composed the first of my pieces that got into print. I was sixteen years old, and was attending the winter term

of the district school. The teacher had announced to our class, in dismissing us at night, that compositions would be expected of us, and I thought it would be a novelty to write mine in rhyme. I did not decide on a subject until after I had gone to bed; then the Tomb of Napoleon occurred to me. Before I slept I had shaped five nine-line stanzas in the metre of Childe Harold, which I wrote out and revised the next day.

With the exception of an essay on the Disappearance of the North American Indians, full of wailing winds and moaning waters and other stock imagery befitting the subject, this was the most serious thing I had undertaken in the way of a school composition, and it was received with mingled incredulity and astonishment. One boy of my age loudly declared that I could never have written a line of it. I said, "You have a good reason for thinking so." "What is that?" he eagerly asked. I replied, "Because you could n't have written a line of it yourself to save your life!"

It was much talked about in school and out; and as much to my surprise as anybody's, it soon appeared in the columns of our county newspaper, the Rochester Republican. I never knew whether it was my father or the schoolmaster who sent it to the printers, but the author's initials were given,

"J. T. T., of Ogden," with the extenuating phrase, "a lad of sixteen years," which did much to destroy any satisfaction I might otherwise have felt on first seeing my rhymes in print. It was copied by a Chicago paper, accompanied by an editorial note comparing it with "the early productions of Prior, Pope, and Chatterton," and calling attention to it as "an indication of what might be expected of the author at a more mature age." This was the first newspaper notice any lines of mine ever received, and it did no harm.

Up to this time I had never quite dared to think that anything I might write was worth publishing. If I had secret dreams of becoming an author, they were scarcely acknowledged even to myself. Shy and diffident, I did not show my most intimate friend, I did not reveal to one of my own family, the quires of foolscap I was spoiling with verses composed while following the plough. After the veil of my reserve had been lifted by that first publication, I began to send to the papers short poems occasionally, which appeared with my initials, but without the offensive reference to the writer's tender years.

I did the usual farm-boy's chores that winter, before and after school. I milked two or three cows, foddered the cattle and sheep, rode the horses to water, often chopping the ice out of the

trough in cold weather, and shoveled paths through the drifts. I was naturally of a hopeful and cheerful disposition, and I remember that as a very pleasant winter.

But in the spring I fell into an unaccountable melancholy. There had been talk of my continuing my studies and preparing for college, but it seemed that nothing was to be done about it that season. The school was over; I thought I was accomplishing nothing; I was wasting my youth; I was in my seventeenth year! The idea of another summer spent in farm work filled me with despair.

I did not conceal my despondency; my folks called me sullen, and asked me what was the matter. The mere mention of my misery intensified it. I could not have told what ailed me; I nursed imaginary woes. I was reading Byron again, and fancied myself akin to that stormy, dissatisfied spirit.

"I had not loved the world, nor the world me."

There is no knowing how long this morbid state would have continued had not a real and overwhelming sorrow come to drive from my mind all unreal wrongs and causeless discontent. My father was stricken with an incurable and rapid disease, and died in May. This first intimate

acquaintance with death and the anguish of separation seemed suddenly to end my boyhood, while the great calamity changed all our lives.

XVI

My mother was left with the small farm of fifty acres, her three boys and one unmarried daughter still at home. The will provided that my elder brother, Windsor, then only nineteen, but an active and enterprising youth, fond of horses, cattle, and country life, should keep the homestead, while I should be free to stay or go, after I was seventeen.

This arrangement seemed the best that could be made. My brother was quite unselfish about it. Taking me aside a few days after the funeral, he said I could have the farm if I wished it, and if I thought I could care as well for it and for our mother's interest in it as he could. He urged me to think it carefully over, assuring me that he would be satisfied either to remain or to go in my place. Now that the choice was left to me, leaving home became a more serious matter than it had appeared before, my future and his and our mother's more or less depending upon my decision. If I remained I was sure of a living, and I could, no doubt, always command some leisure for my favorite pursuits. On the other hand, a feeling of loneliness and uncertainty all at once oppressed me

at the prospect of going out into the world unguided, inexperienced, to make my dubious way. I consulted our mother, who said she would consent to whatever we desired; it would be equally hard to part with either of us, and perhaps I might, after a while, get to manage the farm as well as he could, and do as well by our younger brother. So it was still left to me; and I confess that I was half tempted to choose the immediate good and the more timid part, as I was to be more than once tempted to choose between the narrow certainty and the larger possibility, in the years to follow.

After two or three anxious days and nights, courage and resolution came. I said, "It was father's plan; he knew best. You are cut out for a farmer; I am not." I saw that Windsor was relieved. "But remember," he joined with our mother in saying, "this will always be your home whenever you wish to come back to it."

I never went back to it, except for brief visits, after starting out to make my own way in the world; and before many years it passed from his and her hands, to become the possession of strangers. My brother married at twenty-one, a step of which our mother approved, although she felt that thenceforward the home for which she had toiled so long and made so many sacrifices was no

longer *her* home, as it had been from the time when her own hands helped to carve it out of the wilderness. It had a new mistress, as was fitting; and where her own children had played, grandchildren soon toddled about the door. My brother was a good farmer, but he had a restless disposition. He grew tired of the farm and wished to sell it. She consented even to this heartbreaking sacrifice. His new home was to be hers, and the homes of her married daughters would always be open to her, but there was no other spot in the world like that where her very life had so long struck its roots; and when these were uptorn, she felt that she was from that time forth a "sojourner in the land," as she used to say with Christian resignation.

Windsor tried two or three kinds of business, and finally settled down as a market gardener in Lockport, where we already had a sister living. Our mother's widowhood lasted thirty-eight years, — four years longer than the entire period of her married life. She died in Lockport in 1882, in her ninety-first year. Her constant prayer had long been that she might not outlive her usefulness, and that prayer seemed to have been granted. She retained all her faculties to an extraordinary degree, and was remarkably active until a fatal illness, occasioned by a fall which crippled her; but

REBECCA WILLEY TROWBRIDGE

The Author's Mother at 56

even in those last days she delighted to be doing bits of knitting or embroidery for some of her children or grandchildren, her perfect faith in a future life continuing to the close.

Whether her later years would have had fewer trials if I, instead of my brother, had remained and kept the homestead, can never be known; but unquestionably it was better for me that I should go.

CHAPTER II

STARTING OUT IN THE WORLD

I

Being seventeen in September (1844), I went to live with my married sister, Mrs. Fidelia Phelps, in Lockport, for the purpose of attending a classical school there. My brother-in-law was a farmer, tilling his flat and uninteresting acres of stiff, clayey soil, about half a mile west of what was then the village, acres now long since gathered under the brooding wing of the spreading city.

The Lockport episode was quite to my liking; I had a good home in the country, I had the village and the school. The canal, the water-ways, the mills, the business life, I was interested in all; and, above all, in the locks. I passed the head of these twice a day on my way to and from school, and spent many a leisure half hour watching them. The opening and shutting of the gates, the passing of the boats up and down, their swaying hulls rising or falling and bumping, as the powerful boiling and gushing floods were let in or out, filling or emptying the narrow and deep-walled cham-

bers; the characters of the boatmen and gatemen, and their varied movements through all the locking process; — all this had for me an ever fresh fascination. The Falls of Niagara were only eighteen miles away, and often in the still autumn weather I listened to their continuous, low, hardly distinguishable roar, a sound that always breathed a quiet joy into my soul.

The school was kept by a fairly good teacher, and was attended by about fifteen day pupils, village boys and young men. As a way-mark in my boyish studies I may state that I was far enough along in Latin to enter the advanced class and take up Cicero's Orations. Out of school I found an educated French-Canadian, who gave me private lessons in French pronunciation, and encouraged my visiting his family; this being my first practice in speaking the language.

II

It was in Lockport, when I was seventeen, that I first had the pleasure of earning something with my pen. A prize having been offered by the Niagara Courier for the best poetical New Year's Address of the carrier to his patrons, for January 1, 1845, I determined to compete for it. I had never sent any verses to the Courier, although I walked by the office door every morning on my

way to school; but I had for some time wished to drop a contribution into its letter box, and I reasoned that, even if I did not win the prize, I might write something that would introduce me favorably to the editor.

I soon composed and handed in a patriotic octosyllabic screed of some two or three hundred lines, with backward glances at Columbus and the Pilgrim Fathers, and forward glimpses into our country's future; here a touch of the pathetic in alluding to the vanishing red men, and there a bit of the picturesque in describing Niagara Falls and the primeval forests. In a few days I summoned courage to call at the office and introduce myself, this being my first encounter with that superior being, an editor. He of the Courier seemed surprised at my boyish appearance, found some fault with the politics — or lack of politics — in my Address, which, however, he acknowledged to be the best that had yet been received, and promised that I should soon hear from him if the prize was awarded to me.

Not hearing from him, I had quite given it up, when on New Year's morning I saw the carrier leaving a handsome printed sheet at the village doorways. In a tremor of doubt and expectation I ran up some steps on which it lay half open, and discovered, to my immense surprise and satis-

faction, that it was my Address! I shall never forget how well it looked lying there, with a rising sun for a heading, over the large numerals, 1845!

I lost no time in procuring a copy, and oh, how well it read! I had begun to think my verses poor stuff, but the sight of them in print, with the editorial approval upon them, — tossed on door-steps and under porches, with the morning paper, for all the town to read, — quite altered my opinion of their quality.

Still not hearing from the prize, I let a few days pass, and then once more, with blushing cheeks and palpitating heart, climbed the Courier's office stairs. I may as well confess here that I was a blushing youth, with a good deal more courage for encountering actual danger than for meeting people whom my imagination made formidable. A monarch on his throne could hardly have been more formidable to me at that time than the editor of the Niagara Courier.

He turned from his desk, where he was busy with his morning's mail, gave me a glance of recognition, and kept on opening his letters. I supposed he would save me the embarrassment of explaining my business, but he did n't.

"As I have not received the book," I said, "I have come in to inquire about it."

The "book" was the prize, — a handsomely

bound copy of Griswold's Poets of America, a work I was exceedingly desirous of possessing. To my chagrin I was informed that it had not yet been purchased, but that if I would call again in a couple of days it would be ready for me. I returned at the appointed time and was again put off.

"Come in to-morrow," the editor said, "and I will have it for you."

So once more I mounted his stairs. Still no book. Thereupon I grew indignant. For the moment I felt myself morally superior to the great man who was trifling with me; and I told him that I should not trouble him again. As I was going out of the office he called me back, and taking out his pocket-book, offered me in settlement of my claim a dollar and a half. As the edition specified would have cost twice as much, I felt that I had been circumvented; but I had determined never again to subject myself to the humiliation of seeming to beg for what rightfully belonged to me, and in a moment of indecision I was weak enough to take the money. I was straightway angry with myself for having consented to the compromise, and went away thinking of the dignified and cutting things I ought to have said, after the opportunity had passed for saying them.

Thus the triumph of receiving my first com-

pensation for literary effort, like that of my first appearance in print, had its dash of unpleasantness; a wholesome lesson, no doubt, to my youth and inexperience. I was early learning that there is little unalloyed satisfaction in this sphere of existence, whatever there may be in any other. There is ever a flaw in our good fortune; just as, in our worst fortune, there is nearly always something that may be changed by time and patience into a blessing.

Even what remained to me of my self-complacency on this occasion was extinguished a little later, when I reëxamined my New Year's Address with a sickening doubt, an appalling apprehension, that it might be — that it must be — that it *was* — like my Tomb of Napoleon — mere bosh.

III

During a school vacation I took a run over to Pembroke, in Genesee County, to attend for one week a class in reading and elocution. A run it literally was. Pembroke village was twenty-five miles from my Lockport home, there was no public conveyance thither, and I made the journey on foot, starting off one morning in high health and spirits, and getting through by sundown; — a brisk and exhilarating trip.

The teacher of the class, a retired clergyman,

was a good reader himself, simple and impressive ; but as he drilled us in imitative exercises chiefly, the week's tuition amounted to but little, with at least one pupil. Yet perhaps I ought not to say just that. For, although the first principle of elocution, — namely, that freshness of perception and feeling must precede and accompany all true expression, in order to assimilate the tone of reading to the tone of speaking, — although this foundation principle of naturalness and power was neglected, or insufficiently insisted on, some of his teachings, in the externals of the art, especially in clear and correct enunciation, were excellent. I remember particularly an exercise in the sounds *st* and *sts*, which impressed me as so admirably adapted to overcome the common, slovenly habit of slurring or dropping entirely the *t* in such combinations, that I give it here. These lines we were required to pronounce trippingly on the tongue : —

" Amidst the mists,
With stoutest boasts,
He thrusts his fists
Against the posts,
And still insists
He sees the ghosts."

The school had been recommended to me by a prominent Pembroke citizen, who also invited me to his house for the week of my stay. This friend

was Amaziah Jenkins, a relative of my Lockport relatives, a man of original ideas, an experienced educator, and an ardent abolitionist. He was moreover the first man I ever knew who had published a book; a live author. This to my mind was a very great distinction, although the book in this instance was only an English Grammar. Familiar daily intercourse with him was not merely encouraging to my self-confidence; it was instructive and mentally stimulating. He was ready to talk on all sorts of subjects that interested me, and on one that interested me but little; for although I had a natural abhorrence of slavery, I had heard it preached against so much in our Ogden pulpit that I had grown indifferent to discussions of it. He liked to puzzle me with difficult grammatical questions, of which I recall a sample or two — how to construe "what" in the phrase, "He has more money than he knows what to do with," and "minutes" in "He was given five minutes for reflection," — which latter construction has occasioned the shedding of much erudite ink, in recent years.

He had in his chambers some barrels of books, mostly educational; among which I found a treasure that I had the felicity (for it was nothing less) of carrying away with me at the end of my visit: all of Virgil in one volume, the original accompa-

nied by a transposed text with an interlinear translation, — a work designed for teachers ; but as I was to so great an extent my own teacher, I felt that I was entitled to its help. I found it an invaluable assistant, saving me an immense amount of time and labor in looking up definitions and coaching me over difficulties of construction which, without it, would have left me little strength or leisure for the enjoyment of the immortal hexameters. This was in fact the most precious acquisition I had to remember the Pembroke incident by.

At the close of the Lockport school, my Pembroke friend urged me to try canvassing for an anti-slavery paper with which he had some connection. To this I reluctantly consented, not in order to help the cause he had at heart, but to earn money towards preparing myself for college. By the provisions of the will I had received fifty dollars from the old homestead on my seventeenth birthday, and I was to have as much more the following September; but more than all I could hope to save from this would be necessary, if I was to continue my studies in an academy. So I agreed to the canvassing project.

But I never really undertook it. So invincible was my repugnance to asking of anybody what might seem a favor to myself that I drew back

from the first door I started to enter, and threw up my commission without having solicited a single subscription. As this was my first step in the direction of anything that looked like business, I was deeply chagrined at so inauspicious a commencement. In our boyhood, it was always my older brother who was the more eager to begin new enterprises, while I insisted more on the obstacles in the way; but having entered into a scheme with him, I was the one to stick to it in the face of discouragements and to argue for its completion. But now I seemed to detect in myself an infirmity of purpose that might prove a pitfall in the way of any success in life.

Beside the necessity of earning something, I had another incentive to start out as a canvasser, — the desire to see new places. I gave up the canvassing, but not the idea of travel. I had as yet seen but little of the world, but that little comprised objects of interest and wonder that nourished my imagination, — the great woods in the shadow of whose mysteries and within the sound of whose roar my childhood was passed; the Genesee, and the falls at Rochester (falls indeed then, and strikingly picturesque, before the mill sluices drank them dry); Ontario, to my young fancy a boundless blue sea, as I stood upon the wave-washed shore; then Niagara with its mighty

cataract and wild cliffs and rapids; even the canal and the Lockport locks! And now came an opportunity for seeing something of what was then the far West.

IV

My oldest sister and her husband, Daniel Greene (the Vermont schoolmaster), had been eleven years settled in their Illinois home, when in the summer of 1845 I determined to see the land she lauded so in her letters, — the land of the grouse and the deer, of prairie flowers and prairie fires, of grove-bordered streams and boundless horizons. Their westward journey had been made across Canada, the most practicable land route from Buffalo to Detroit in 1834. Our father and mother had both successively visited them, he partly by water and partly by stage-coach across Michigan (the roughest of stage routes), and she by schooner around the lakes, a voyage of nearly two weeks from Buffalo to Chicago. A line of steamboats had since been established between those two cities, and it was by steamboat that we (my unmarried sister accompanied me) made the trip by the lakes.

I have forgotten how many days it took, but to my mind the voyage was not half long enough, and when our boat went hard aground in the

St. Clair River, I remember experiencing some regret that with the help of a tug and stretched hawsers it was got off in the course of an afternoon. I have made I know not how many western journeys since, but never another that I enjoyed with so much zest, or that I so vividly remember. To this day I can see the large, tranquil fishes at the bottom of the deep, still, wonderfully clear water of the Straits of Mackinaw, where we lay two or three hours, and where I should have been delighted to remain as many days.

Mr. Greene met us in Chicago, then a shabby city of eleven thousand inhabitants, plank sidewalks, and unpaved streets, which became sloughs of mud in foul weather, and in which I was afterwards to see many a farm wagon stalled, with wheels sinking to the hubs in the mire. It had no attractions for me except the lake shore, which had not yet been ruled off by railroad tracks; and after a day and a night at a hotel, I was glad to drive out across the flat, adjacent prairie and over the fine upland country beyond, to Nine Oaks farm, on the East Branch of the Du Page. What a welcome we received there, how our sister ran out to meet us as the wagon turned up to the gate, and hugged us and cried over us as she took us into the house, — these are memories of the time, which cannot be dwelt on here.

I found within sight of the house, between the skirting grove on one side and the river winding through the broad bottom-land on the other, the charms her facile pen had painted for my allurement; and within an hour or two after our arrival, I was tramping, gun in hand, through my brother-in-law's buckwheat, scaring up and shooting — or, to be more exact, shooting at — prairie chickens on the wing. That very evening I saw my first deer, a lovely doe, in graceful leaps undulating over the high grass of the bottom-land, going to drink at the river.

V

I did some work on the farm, the rest of that summer and in the autumn following, and some desultory studying and reading; but spent more time ranging the woodlands and high prairies, on horseback or afoot, sometimes hunting strayed cattle by the sound of the bells, always a welcome music, when heard afar off over the fenceless hills, or in bushy underwoods. But oftener I hunted more interesting game, — chiefly prairie hens, and latterly deer, shooting of these, as I recall with compunction, two; one a fine buck, the sad story of which would be long to tell, the other a slender doe, that turned up at me such piteous, almost human eyes, as she lay bleeding at my feet, that

I wished never to shoot another deer, and never did.

There was one creature, common then and there, which I let pass no opportunity for destroying. This was the prairie rattlesnake. Rather than suffer one to live, I would walk a long distance for a club with which to finish it. I fully sympathized with the surveyor who, strolling away from his camp one evening, came upon a rattler on the open prairie. He had only his cigar in his hand, and there was neither stick nor stone within a mile. The coiled reptile presented so fair a mark that he felt sure he could kill it with his boot, which he pulled off for the purpose. The snake struck as he did, and in his nervousness he let the boot fall. It was then absolutely necessary to kill the snake in order to get back his boot; so he pulled off his other boot, and lost that in the same way. The snake held the fort; and there was nothing for him to do but to walk back to his camp, a good mile, in his stockings.

Cattle, that would never pay the slightest attention to any other snake, would start violently aside at sight or sound of a rattler. This dread of the creature must have been instinctive, for it could hardly have been the result of individual or inherited experience; it was not probable that the average ox, or any one of its progenitors, had ever

received a venomous bite. My brother-in-law had a dog that exhibited the same instinctive repugnance, but in a different way. If he came upon a rattler stretched out on the ground, he would make a dart at its neck, and shake it to pieces before the deadly, fanged head had time to turn. If it had got into a coil, his attack was more circumspect; he would begin to walk around it at a safe distance, barking excitedly, his head toward the poised head of the reptile, causing it to follow his movements, until the coil was sufficiently unwound, when he would make a quick dart, and —look out for the flying fragments! How he ever learned this trick nobody knew. The development of the venom in the reptile and of the instinct in the animal would be, if one had the needful data, an extremely interesting study in evolution.

The bite of the prairie rattlesnake is dangerous, but not necessarily fatal. I knew of one painful case. A boy killed a snake, as he supposed, and left it lying under a stone. The act was witnessed by a younger brother about three years old, who followed him home, and interrupted his story to say, "Snake bite me!" The older said, "That's just his fancy; I killed it, and he was n't anywhere near it." The child insisted, "Snake bite me!" and, when it was late to apply a remedy, it

was noticed that his hand was swelling. Hand and arm swelled frightfully; the face and entire body turned dark purple; he fell into a stupor that lasted several days, and barely escaped death. It seemed that he had gone back to the snake after the older boy had left it, that he had moved the stone, and received a bite.

The usual remedy was whiskey, and a popular one. So popular was it in fact, among a certain class, that one could readily believe what was said of impecunious topers, — that they would sometimes get themselves bitten purposely, and then make appeal to the charitable-minded for the quart of cure. It took a deal of one kind of poison to counteract, in the system, a very minute quantity of the other.

VI

There was a pleasant society in the neighborhood, in which I found enjoyment, notably when snow came, and the weather was fine for sleighing parties, — sleigh bottoms packed with hay and buffalo robes, and merry young people full of the inspiration of that new, free, western life. One Saturday afternoon two sleigh loads of us drove to Joliet, where in the cheer of a good hotel we took no note of time or of a change in the weather, and so became lost in a thick snowstorm, at night,

on the open prairies, on our return drive of some fifteen miles. A furious blizzard was setting in; and, though we had great confidence in the driver of our foremost sleigh, a sagacious and self-reliant young man, when he acknowledged to me that he had no idea where we were, I was impressed with the alarming prospect of our passing the night in our open sleighs, or under them, if as a last resort we turned them over, with the bottoms canted against the driving storm.

I suggested that if he could n't find the track, perhaps the horses might. He agreed, slacked the reins, and let the pair travel as they would. In the blinding snow it was impossible to discover any change in their course; and, if their instinct was trustworthy, what soon followed was disheartening. Their steady trot fell off to a walk, then suddenly they stopped. There was some obstacle ahead; it proved to be a fence. A solitary settler had inclosed his little home-lot of an acre or two, and, with no credit to the team, by sheer good luck we had struck it, when there were a score of chances to one of our passing it, and driving on over the storm-swept, limitless prairies. His hut was near by, — found after a little tramping and shouting; we roused him up, and he set us on our way.

That winter I was beginning, for the first time,

to earn an independent livelihood. I taught the district school in my brother-in-law's neighborhood, — three and a half or four months, at twelve dollars a month and my board. The "board" meant "boarding around" in the homes of my pupils; which again meant living a week or so at a time in the pleasantest of them, neglecting the others, and spending my Saturdays and Sundays and much other surplus time with my friends. Some of my best pupils were German children, whose parents had lately settled in that region, and who could speak hardly a word of English on entering the school. The rapid progress the brightest of these made in learning to read and write and speak a new language was something marvelous. Both the teaching and the boarding around among the better class of families were a novel and profitable experience; I had an interesting little school, and I was sorry when it came to a close. One reason for my regret was, it must be acknowledged, a pecuniary one. "Twelve dollars a month and board" seems little indeed, but I had never earned wages before, and when should I have another opportunity of earning as much, and as easily?

In the spring my brother-in-law, to give me some encouragement in the way of business, I suppose, — certainly with no idea of advantage to

himself, — made me an astonishing proposition. I had expected to return to the East in April, but both he and my sister urged me to remain with them another summer. Farm wages would have been hardly the thing for him to offer or for me to receive; so he proposed that I should take some of his land to work "on shares." He would furnish seed, team, farming tools, everything but the work, which I was to do; my compensation to be, as I remember, one third of the crop. The crop was to be spring wheat; his corn and other crops he would raise, with the help of his hired man. Considering my age (eighteen) and a sad habit I had contracted of lingering too long over books, it was a surprising offer. The work I would have to do was what I liked best on a farm, — ploughing and harrowing, and harrowing again after the seed was sown; I liked the country and the neighborhood, and above all my sister and her family (Mr. Greene was one of the most upright and liberal men I knew, and one of the wittiest); I should be in one sense my own master and have some leisure for my studies. I considered all these advantages, and consented, no doubt wisely, to his plan.

After the crop was "in" I remained, waiting for it to mature, doing meanwhile some work for my brother-in-law, and reading (as I remember)

Burns's poems, which I had found at the home of a friend, the Bucolics of Virgil, in the volume I had brought from Pembroke, and some German, having that year begun the study of that language. I recall but little regarding the wheat crop, except that it grew finely in that rich prairie soil, and gave fair promise of paying me well for my labor, until at a critical time, just as the milky berry was filling, there came a week of hot and humid weather; the "rust" struck the rank stalks, the immature grains shriveled, and my hopes with them; and my beautiful fields, although they turned duly from green to golden, produced but a poor and unprofitable crop. That was the last of my farming.

I did not stay for the threshing, but returned to the East in August, visited my relatives in Ogden and Lockport, and in the autumn (being then nineteen) took a district school in Lockport, two or three miles north of the village.

VII

In my Lockport school I had about thirty pupils, of ages varying from seven or eight years to eighteen or twenty, two or three of the older boys being larger and taller than myself. I was warned that previous teachers — "masters" they were called — had had trouble with big boys in that dis-

trict, and that physical energy and rigid discipline would be required to get through the winter term satisfactorily; but I had faith that I could succeed as I had succeeded with my smaller Illinois school.

From the start I found the older pupils, girls and boys alike, amenable to reason, and if I sometimes had to inflict slight punishments on the younger ones, it was because their natural restlessness and love of mischief were too strong in them for the undeveloped moral sense, and because no unassisted teacher in a school of that sort, miscellaneous and ungraded, has time for persuasive measures only, in each particular case requiring discipline. I "boarded around" again, and that custom helped me to establish friendly relations with parents and pupils.

I made the morning fires that winter, not merely because building fires was considered one of the master's duties, but for the advantages attending it. There was something indescribably exhilarating in leaving my boarding-place as soon as I had eaten my breakfast, facing the frosty air, and tramping through the snow to the schoolhouse at the Corners; starting a blaze in the cold, coffin-shaped stove, stuffing it full of wood, then sitting down before it in my cap and overcoat, with my feet on the hearth, and having an hour or more all to myself over my Virgil or Schiller or La Fontaine.

Not a picture or frame of any sort relieved the dingy gray of the blank, plastered walls. The floor in places most trodden was worn to the semblance of shallow valleys, with ranges of miniature hills where the shiny heads of board-nails protected it from abrasion. The benches were of the plainest, shiny-smooth in the part most exposed to friction, and the desk surfaces were diversified with intaglios not particularly ornamental, boats, house-gables, tomahawks (the last was a favorite device), cut, or rather dug out, by juvenile jack-knives. Yet though my surroundings were so unattractive, and so absolutely comfortless but for the blaze my own hands kindled, I was oblivious of all that bleakness and bareness and ugliness; I was in the domain of mind, with high thoughts and purposes for my companions. I look back now to that far-off time with envy of my own fine spirits and joyous youth; and I lack words to tell how sweet to me was the seclusion of those morning hours in the cheerless school-room before the pupils came stamping in.

The boarding-place I best remember was the house of a man named Gibson, who had three children in my school, — not half so many as I could have wished, since the more pupils there were in a family, the longer the master was entitled to claim its hospitalities. Gibson was an

educated Scotchman who had come to this country as a civil engineer, and had finally settled down as a Niagara County farmer. He would spend a whole evening talking to me of Scott and Burns, and of one younger Scotch writer of whom he predicted great things. Burns he knew almost by heart; and he recited Tam O'Shanter with amazing unction and animation. The younger author, who had been a friend of his early manhood, a comrade and classmate, still wrote to him from Scotland quaintly entertaining letters and sent him all his books successively as they appeared. So desirous was he of interesting me in them that he offered to lend me any or all of them, and would, I have no doubt, if I had become his prophet's disciple, have presented me a volume, with the flyleaf inscription which I should be rather glad now to have — "From his friend, Thomas Carlyle." Although I was to come later under their powerful influence, I thought then I had no time for "Hero Worship," "Sartor Resartus," or the "French Revolution." Youth passes many such doors that stand ready to open for it into treasure-houses of golden opportunity.

VIII

The range of studies required to be taught in the ungraded district school of those days was some-

thing preposterous, often extending all the way from the first steps in reading, writing, and numbers, to higher arithmetic and grammar, including perhaps algebra, natural philosophy, and chemistry, the two last without any laboratory or apparatus. Mine being a winter term, I had no abecedarians, for which mercy I was grateful. Quill pens were in use, and during the half hour given to the writing lesson the prevailing silence was broken by the scratching of nibs, and the altogether too frequent appeal, "Mend my pen, master? Please mend my pen?" Skill in pen-mending was one of the teacher's indispensable accomplishments; he was likewise required to write the learners' copy. Mere drudgery much of this was, and it would have been intolerable to my youth and inexperience and sensitive nervous-sanguine temperament, but for the double necessity of doing my duty to those under my charge and of earning my humble salary — sixteen dollars a month, that season. Yet the pleasure I took in some of my work atoned for much of the annoyance attending the rest. I had classes in algebra and French, which were a positive satisfaction. The French was voluntary on my part, three or four of my advanced pupils having taken it up, at my suggestion, in place of chemistry.

I had no serious trouble in governing the school,

except on one critical occasion, when an act of haughty disobedience on the part of one of the older boys, taller if not heavier than I, resulted in a rough-and-tumble contest for supremacy on the school-room floor, in the presence of the amazed and frightened pupils. When we finally went down together, it chanced that I was a-top. It was even a more decided moral than a physical victory, for I felt that the sympathies of the entire school, even of the boy's brother and sister, were on my side. I have described a struggle very similar to this in one of my minor novels, "The Little Master," but between the actual circumstance and the fictitious one suggested by it, there is this important difference, that in my own case the rebellious pupil's parents, as well as his brother and sister, sided with the teacher. After that, harmony reigned in my little realm, and I was made to feel in many ways the increased good-will of all the older scholars.

IX

The Lockport winter term was the last of my experience as a school-teacher. At its close I went to Brockport, a village on the Erie Canal, where there was an academy, with the intention of entering it. I entered it for one day; or, more strictly speaking, for one hour. I saw the prin-

cipal, whom I remember as a stocky man with a wooden leg, and talked with students who had been a year or two in attendance. When I learned how long they had been in traversing fields of study which I had passed, unassisted, in one half the time (more superficially, without doubt), how far in advance I was, in Latin, of the class I hoped to enter, and how far behind in Greek, and how little progress the routine of the term promised after all, I was dismayed at what, to my boyish conceit, appeared a treadmill process of education. The truth was, my desultory methods of study had rendered me impatient of what would have been, undoubtedly, a useful discipline. I had idealized the academy, which I had longed for and looked forward to so long, fancying it something entirely different from the Lockport classical school; and I found it a little more of the same sort, on a larger scale. With my habits of solitary application, I could do out of it all I could hope to do in it, and more in directions in which I wished to go.

Then there was the important economic consideration. From my farming and teaching I had saved barely enough money to take me through the term; and at its close I should have to go to work to earn more, either at farming or teaching. To neither of these occupations did I desire ever

to return. I went out from the throng of students when the organization of classes had barely begun, and walked the streets of Brockport village in a deeply anxious frame of mind, until I had reached one of those momentous decisions which often mark a crisis in our lives. I would give up all thought of working my way through college, and face the world at once in search of fortune, if fortune there might be for one so ill prepared and of so uncertain aims.

I hastened to the pleasant village home where I had engaged board for the term, and found, to my relief, that the room would be in request by other applicants; packed my trunk, and hurried with it on board the first packet boat for Spencer's Basin; returned to the Ogden homestead for a brief visit, and to put into shape some poems and sketches, a few in print but more in manuscript, which I had not yet been wise enough to burn; then, on the tenth day of May, 1847, not yet twenty years of age, I started for New York.

CHAPTER III

FIRST EXPERIENCES AS A WRITER

I

TRAVELING by packet boat on the Erie Canal, from Rochester, and by steamboat down the Hudson from Albany, I arrived at the pier in New York at daybreak on the morning of May 15, 1847.

And what a daybreak it was! The great river, the shipping, the mast-fringed wharves, the misty morning light, the silent streets of the hardly yet awakening city, the vastness and strangeness and mystery of it all, kindled my enthusiasm and made me glad I had come. In all that mighty metropolis I knew not a single soul; I brought no message to any one, not a letter of introduction; I knew no more what was before me, than if I had dropped upon Mars or the Moon; but what of that? Here was life, and I was young!

It was characteristic of my impressible and impulsive nature that I strolled about City Hall Park and down Broadway to the Battery, where I sat long on the benches, enjoying the novel scenes,

the sails and steamboats, the dashing waves, the cool breeze from the water, then crossed by ferry to Brooklyn and back, before I thought of looking for a boarding-place. Then I found one on the shady side of Duane Street, quite near Broadway, and not very far from the steamboat wharf, where I had left my trunk. In country fashion I knocked at the door, and wondered why nobody came to let me in. I was so green I did not know a door-bell.

The door was opened by a smiling little doctor, who, I must do him the justice to say, continued to smile (perhaps he smiled all the more) when he learned that I had come for board and not for a prescription. He instructed me in the mysteries of the bell-pull, and a maid convoyed me upstairs to the landlady. It was a boarding-house "for gentlemen only," the "gentlemen" being for the most part dry-goods clerks, and young men — elderly men, too, as I was soon to discover — out of business and seeking employment.

I had a roommate at first, a companionable fellow, who began at once to enlighten me in the agreeable vices of city life, offering to "take me everywhere." He was so well dressed and so frankly friendly, and the allurements he described were, from his point of view, such matters of course for any one privileged to enjoy them, that

I did not realize at all that my first city acquaintance was a dangerous one. Indeed, he was not dangerous to me. I listened to him with curiosity and perfect toleration, and took one or two walks with him; but soon withdrew from his society, simply because our tastes were not congenial, and I had aspirations to which his atmosphere was not the breath of life. I told our landlady that I must have a room by myself, or go elsewhere, — that I not only wished to write and study a good deal, but that the mere presence of a roommate was irksome to me. She gave me a small room with one window, high up in the house, — the conventional garret, in short, — and I was happy.

What, after all, was the motive that had brought me to New York? That I had secret hopes of becoming an author is certainly true; but I had not confided them to my most intimate friend, I scarcely dared acknowledge them to myself; and I was not presumptuous enough to suppose that at the age of nineteen, ill equipped as I was for such a career, I could start in at once and earn a living by my pen. I carried with me my manuscripts and books, and habits of study and composition, in which I had satisfaction for their own sake, and which I fondly believed would reward me with happiness, if not fortune, in the near future; but in the mean time I flattered myself

that I was looking for some business of a practical nature.

I answered an advertisement for a young man who wrote a good hand and knew something of accounts, and found a crowd of applicants at the place before me. I visited an employment office, which got my dollar on the false pretense of insuring me a good situation within a week, but rendered me not the slightest service. I had cherished, like so many country boys, romantic dreams of going to sea; I frequented the wharves, and observed the sailors, and was quickly cured of any desire to ship before the mast, but still fancied I would like to be a supercargo, or something of that sort; even a voyage or two as cabin boy might have its attractions. I had also heard of such a position as that of navy captain's secretary, which I thought would be peculiarly desirable for a youth of some literary capacity wishing to see the world. One day, perceiving a man-of-war in port, and a fine-looking officer on the quarter-deck walking to and fro under an awning, I ventured on board, and accosted him, with all due respect, as I thought then, and as I still believe. I have quite forgotten what I was starting to say, but I remember well the curt command that cut me short: "Take off your hat when you address a gentleman!" uttered without discon-

tinuing his walk, or turning his face, which he carried high before him.

If he had hurled a binnacle at me, or a bow-anchor, or anything else naval and characteristic, I could not have been more astounded. Seeing that he wore his own cap (handsomely gold-laced, as I have him in my mind's eye still), and we were in the open air but for the awning, I could not possibly discover how I had merited so brutal a rebuff. I stared at him a moment, stifling with astonishment and humiliation, and indignant enough to hurl back at him anything in his own line, a capstan or a forecastle — I was too angry to make a discriminating choice. Fortunately I had sense enough to reflect that he was in his own little kingdom, and that if I was not pleased with the manners of the country the sooner I took myself out of it the better. I turned my back on him abruptly and left the ship, choking down my wrath, but thinking intently (too late, as was my habit) of the killingly sarcastic retort I might have made. Thus was quenched in me the last flickering inclination for a seafaring life.

II

Meanwhile I went about the actual, unpractical business which, unconfessedly, I had most at heart. I offered a volume of verses — in a variety

of styles, derived from Byron, Scott, and Burns, with here and there a reminiscence of Hudibras — to two or three publishers, all of whom but one declined even to look at them (perhaps looking at the author's face was sufficient), telling me, kindly enough but firmly, that no book of poems unless written by a man of established reputation could possibly attract public attention. The one who did at last consent to examine my manuscripts returned them with even fewer words, no doubt thinking he had already wasted too many on a hopeless case.

"I must make a reputation before I can get anybody to print my volume," I said to myself; and I could see but one way of doing that. I selected some of the shorter pieces from my collection, and began offering them to the weekly papers, along with some prose sketches which I had brought from the country, or completed after my arrival. I did not find editors anxious to fill their columns with my poetry; and though my prose articles met with more favor, I was told even by those who expressed a willingness to print them that they did not pay for "such things."

I was a shy youth, and it really required heroic effort on my part to make these calls on editors and publishers, and offer them my crude literary

wares, which I was pretty sure to have handed back to me, perhaps with that cold silence so much more killing even than criticism to a young writer's aspirations. How often in those days I stood panting at an editor's door, waiting to still my heart-beats and gain breath and courage for the interview, then perhaps cravenly descending the stairs and putting off till another day the dreaded ordeal! I could never forget those bitter experiences, which I trust made me somewhat tender of the feelings of literary aspirants when in later years it came my turn to exercise a little brief authority in an editorial chair.

Rebuffs from other sources made me peculiarly sensitive to the first kind words of encouragement that I remember receiving in those days. I suppose I was all the more grateful for them because they came from one of those whom it required most courage to meet. In my boyhood I was overawed by imposing reputations; and in 1847 Major Noah was one of the prominent men of New York. He had originated two or three daily papers, and was then editor and proprietor of the "Sunday Times." He had written successful plays, and was the author of two or three books; he had served his country abroad, and had, if I remember rightly, been mayor of New York. He was an Israelite who aspired to be a leader of the

Israelites; and he had made himself widely talked about at home and abroad by his Utopian scheme of gathering his people together in a city of the Jews on Grand Island in the Niagara River. This New Jerusalem was actually begun, but never got much beyond a monument on the ruins of which could be read long afterwards the inscription: "Ararat, a City of Refuge for the Jews, founded by Mordecai M. Noah in the month of Tishri, 5586 (September, 1825), and in the 50th year of the American Independence." He was a leading politician, and a well-known figure in New York; large, portly, with strong, florid, Hebraic features, at that time a little over 60 years of age.

To him, among others, I submitted a specimen of my verse. He looked up from his desk, in a small, littered room, where he was writing rapidly his weekly editorials for the "Times," and told me dryly that it would be of no use for him to read my poem, since he could not print it.

"It may be of use to me, if you will take the trouble to look at it," I said; "for I should like to have some person of experience tell me whether there is any chance of my earning money by my pen in this city of New York."

"Anybody who wishes to do that must write prose and leave poetry alone," he replied. Whereupon I told him I had at my boarding-place an

unfinished story I would like to show him. "Finish it," he said, "and bring it to me. I shall not probably be able to use it, but I may direct you to somebody who can. At all events, I will tell you what I think of it."

From the moment when he spoke to me I was relieved entirely of the diffidence with which I had approached him. When I went to call on him again I felt that I was going to see a friend. Meanwhile I had finished my story — the most ambitious thing I had yet attempted — and sent it to him.

He offered me a stool beside his chair and laid out my manuscript on his desk.

"Young man," said he, "I think you have it in you." I was speechless, shivering with joy. "This," pushing my poem aside, "is well enough; you may get to write very good verse by and by. But don't write any more while you have to earn your living by your pen. Here is your stronghold," laying his large but delicate hand on my story. "I have n't had time to read much of it, but I see that you have struck the right key, and that you have had the good sense not to make your style too dignified, but lively and entertaining. You have humor; you can tell a story; that 's a great deal in your favor."

This is the substance of his kindly comment,

which the novelty of the circumstance and the immense importance to me of the occasion impressed indelibly upon my mind. He then inquired if I had any other means of support.

"None, whatever," I replied, "unless I go back to farming or school-teaching, which I don't mean to do."

"All the better," he said; "necessity will teach you sobriety, industry, thrift. You will have to work hard; you will meet with a great deal of discouragement; but writing for the press is a perfectly legitimate profession, and if you devote yourself to it, there is no reason why you should n't succeed."

I do not know that ever in my life any words had made me so happy as these. In subsequent days of struggle, when more than once I was on the point of flinging down my pen, I sometimes wondered whether they were wise for him to speak or good for me to hear. But now that more than half a century has passed, and I can look back upon my early life almost as dispassionately as if it were that of another person, I can thank him again for the first authentic judgment ever pronounced upon my literary possibilities.

"Come with me," he said, putting on his hat; and we went out together, I with my roll of manuscript, he with his stout cane. Even if I had been

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unaware of the fact, I should very soon have discovered that I was in company with an important personage. Everybody observed him, and it seemed as if every third or fourth man we met gave him a respectful salute. He continued his friendly talk with me in a way that relieved me of all sense of my own insignificance in the shadow of his celebrity and august proportions. Looking back upon myself now, through the glass of memory, I behold a very different figure from that which retired so precipitately from the unmannerly officer's quarter-deck hardly two weeks before. One is a confident youth, stepping hopefully beside his noble guide and friend; the other, an abashed and verdant boy. There seem to be two of me on those curiously contrasted occasions.

III

The Major took me to the office of a publisher in Ann Street, who did not chance to be in. He left my manuscript with a good word for it, and a promise to call with me again. Twice afterwards he took me to Ann Street with no better success. Such disinterested kindness, on the part of an old and eminent and fully occupied man, to a strange lad from the country, warms my heart again with reverence and gratitude as I think of it at this distant day.

At last he gave me a letter of introduction to Mr. Williams, the Ann Street publisher, and advised me to find him when I could. I did at last find him, with a smile on his face and my own manuscript in his hand, reading it with manifest amusement, when I handed him Noah's letter. It was a story, as I recollect, in some ten chapters, in which I had made an attempt to portray Western scenes and characters as I had observed them during my year in Illinois. After some talk about it, he asked me what price I expected to receive for it. I replied that I had not put any price upon it.

"Major Noah," I said, "advised me to leave that to you." But as he urged me to name a "figure," I said I had hoped it might be worth to him about a hundred and twenty-five dollars.

"Hardly that," he said, with a smile. "We have never paid so much for any writer's first story."

"Oh, well," I replied, "name your own price."

He named twenty-five dollars. That seems a ludicrous falling away from my figure, but I did not regard it as at all ludicrous at the time. Twenty-five dollars, as the first substantial earnings of my pen, was after all a goodly sum, for one in my circumstances, and vastly better than the return of my manuscript into my hands. That a production of my pen could be deemed to

have *any* money value was a consideration that carried with it present satisfaction and hope in the future. I gladly accepted his offer, and saw him lay my story away on a shelf beside a number of others awaiting each its turn at the newspaper mill of novelettes attached to the publishing shop.

Soon after that Major Noah took me to the office of Mr. Holden, publisher of "Holden's Dollar Magazine," so called because it was sent to subscribers for one dollar a year, although, as I found, it earned a still further claim to the title by paying its writers one dollar a page. An introduction by Major Noah insured me polite attention from Mr. Holden, who read promptly the story I offered him (a sort of backwoods adventure), accepted it, and printed it in his forthcoming number. These were the first contributions of mine ever accepted by "paying" publications. The Holden story was quite short; it made only five or six pages, and I remember having to wait for my five or six dollars until it appeared between the covers of the magazine. It was copied into Howitt's "People's Journal," of London, and reprinted in many papers in this country, and was the cause of my indulging illusory dreams of a brilliantly dawning reputation.

After getting a second story accepted by "Holden's," and one by another periodical of some liter-

ary pretensions, of which I have forgotten even the name, I determined to devote myself solely to writing for magazines and newspapers. I have now to tell how, after I had given up all thought of seeking other employment, other employment sought me.

IV

Among the Duane Street boarders was an Englishman of somewhat distinguished appearance, Dr. Child, with whom I soon became quite intimately acquainted, although he was my senior by about fifteen years. Perhaps we were all the more interested in each other because of the contrast in our early lives; he had been confessedly a prodigal, and he told me of the opportunities he had wasted, while I confided to him mine, which I had shaped for myself against adverse circumstances. His father had been a successful oculist in a provincial English town, in whose office he had had experience as an assistant, and upon whose death he had essayed to succeed him in his practice. Failing in that, and in several other ventures, he had come to this country with an eyewater which he hoped to transmute into a Pactolian stream. He had been some time in New York, looking for a partner in his enterprise, — the doctor to furnish the formula, as an offset to

the ten or twenty thousand dollars necessary for the manufacture and advertising.

He had a professional habit of scrutinizing people's optics, and perceiving signs of the chronic irritation in mine, he presented me with a bottle of Child's Magical Remedy (or Radical Remedy; I have forgotten just what he called it, but one name is as good as another), which he guaranteed would cure them in ten days. This was the beginning of our friendship, which would have continued till this time if it had lasted as long as the ailment has that he proposed to relieve.

I had known him barely a month when he one day drew me aside to ask if I had a little money I could spare. "Not for making eyewater," I replied jokingly; but he was profoundly serious. He went on to say that he had left a wife in England, that she had followed him to America (rather against his wishes, I inferred), and was then staying with a relative in Hoboken. He was planning to set up housekeeping with her, and had selected a small tenement suitable for their purpose in Jersey City. But the furniture was all to be bought, and he was out of money. The Hoboken relative (an engraver of gold watch-cases and watch-dials) would help him a little; but he needed about forty dollars more; and could I accommodate him with that amount?

"I have as much," I said (I had just got my twenty-five dollars from the Ann Street shop), "but I shall probably need it to pay my board before I get more."

"Advance me forty dollars," he replied, "and come and live with us and board it out;" arguing that a quiet home, like the one offered me, would be much pleasanter, and better for my literary work, than the Duane Street boarding-house.

I was easily persuaded, and handed over to him nearly all the money I had, rather rashly, as it seems to me now; but although, in his rôle of oculist and self-styled "doctor," I considered him a charlatan, I trusted him as a friend. The house was furnished, and I went to live with the reunited pair, in very modest quarters in Jersey City. There I passed the rest of that summer quite comfortably, taking long rambles on the Jersey side, a salt-water bath every morning on a tide-washed beach of the great river, and frequent ferry trips to New York. I had a good room to write in, with which indispensable convenience I felt I could be happy almost anywhere.

In the shop of the Hoboken relative the doctor had learned to do a little ornamental work with the graver, chiefly on gold pencil-cases; and some time in the autumn he set up a little shop of his own, in the back room at home. I used to sit by

his table, watching him; and one day, borrowing a graver and a strip of zinc, I amused myself with them while we talked. After a little practice I could cut his simple rose-petals and little branching scrolls as well as he could, and soon found myself working on the pencil-cases. Gold pencils were the fashion in those days, and as Christmas was approaching, he had more work than he could do without assistance. On the other hand, the periodicals I was writing for had accepted as many of my articles as they could use for some time to come, and, as I generally had to wait for my pay until the day of publication, I was in need of money, and glad of a chance to earn it. So, when he proposed to take me into partnership, I accepted the offer, bought a set of gravers, and settled down to the work, which was quite to my taste, and which, almost from the start, I could turn off as rapidly as he. It required something of a knack to make with a free hand the clean, graceful strokes, of varying width and depth, taking care never to cut through the thin material.

Those were pleasant hours for me, in the small back room. The doctor was excellent company. He had done a good deal of miscellaneous reading, and seen a life as widely different from mine as his provincial England was distant from my own native backwoods and Western prairies; and (if

his wife chanced to be out of earshot) he delighted to impart to me his varied experiences. Some of these were not, from a moralistic point of view, particularly to his credit, but I was an eager student of life, and nothing human was foreign to my interest.

His eyewater having failed to float his fortunes, it is difficult to conjecture what would have become of the Jersey City housekeeping, and of me and my forty dollars, but for this industry, to which he was introduced by the Hoboken relative. I boarded out his debt to me according to our agreement; and through the connection thus formed I was by the middle of December earning two or three dollars a day at the trade picked up thus by accident.

It was not solely to keep the work from seeking other hands, nor through good-will to me, that he took me into partnership. He was then getting his pencil-cases from the factories, and it was galling to his sense of dignity that he, a professional man and a gentleman (an English gentleman, recollect), should be obliged to go for them, and return them, and receive his paltry pay, like a common mechanic.

After we became partners, I assumed the outdoor duties, which were an agreeable change from plodding over the pencil-cases, the more especially

as one of the factories was in New York, and crossing the ferries was a delight to me, in all weathers and at all seasons of the year. I can see myself now, on a wild winter's morning, watching from the bow — or, if there was too keen a wind, or snow or sleet driving, from a cabin window — the careening sloops, the diagonally-crossing ferry-boats, the foraging gulls, and the cakes of floating ice amid which our boat made its way.

After Christmas, work was less plenty, and occasionally there was none at all. We now experienced the disadvantage of not having acquired the handicraft by a more thorough apprenticeship. The New York factory, pleased with our pencil-cases, proposed to me to take silver combs to engrave; and I remember how reluctant I was to admit that I had learned to do pencil-cases only. The surface of the high silver comb (such as ladies wore in those days) called for a breadth of treatment quite beyond my experience. The foreman thought I could do it, and, after my frank confession, I was willing to make the trial. I took home one of the combs and carved on it a design that must have astonished him by its bold originality. I recall the peculiar smile with which he held it up and regarded it. I can also still imagine the galaxy of bright faces that would have been turned towards any lady venturing to bear that cynosure

aloft on her back hair in any civilized assembly. It would have been just the thing for the Queen of Dahomey, or a belle of the Cannibal Islands. But the factory was not making combs for those markets. Blushing very red, I remarked, "I told you I could n't do it."

The foreman replied, "I guess you told the truth for once!"

We had a good laugh over it, which he probably enjoyed more than I did. I knew as well as he how grotesquely bad it was, and was surprised when he added, —

"For a first attempt you might have done worse. You need practice and instruction." He then proposed that I should come and work in the shop, assuring me that I should be earning a good living in the course of a few weeks. He knew my friend's Hoboken relative, who was easily earning his seven or eight dollars a day by cutting miniature setters and pheasants, nests with eggs, and tufts of grass, on gold watch-dials, and thought I could do as well in time. The proposal was alluring, and it required courage to decline it. But I had chosen my calling, and could not think seriously of another.

Soon after that, the supply of pencil-cases ran so low that there was not work enough even for one; so I withdrew from the partnership and re-

turned to my writing, — which, indeed, I had never quite abandoned. I passed the winter pleasantly and contentedly enough. But one such winter sufficed. Then in spring the young man's fancy lightly turned to a change of boarding-place.

V

One forenoon, as I was strolling on Broadway, not far above City Hall Park, I saw in a doorway the notice, "Furnished Room to let." There were similar notices displayed all over the city, and I must have passed several that morning ; but at that door, up a flight of steps (there was a wine store in the basement), something impelled me to ring, — my good genius, if I have one. It proved to be the one domicile in which, if I had thought of it beforehand, I should have deemed it especially fortunate to be received. If I had sought it I should probably never have found it ; and I had come upon it by what appeared the merest chance.

A French maid admitted me, and a vivacious Frenchman, who spoke hardly a word of English, showed me the room, and introduced me to his wife, a stout, red-faced woman, as voluble and friendly, and as delightfully ignorant of English, as himself. They seemed as happy at the prospect of having a lodger who could speak their

language a little as I was pleased to enter a family in which only French was spoken. They took no boarders, and the room alone — a good-sized one, up three flights, with an outlook on Broadway — cost two thirds as much as I had paid for board and lodgings together in Duane Street and Jersey City, — far too much for my precarious income; but I could not let pass such an opportunity for acquiring a colloquial familiarity with the language I had as yet had but little practice in speaking. As I was to get my meals outside, I thought I could, when necessary, scrimp enough in that direction to offset the higher room rent.

I hastened back to Jersey City, packed my books and baggage, and took leave of the friends in whose home I had been an inmate for about nine months. I was a home-loving youth, and it was always painful for me to sever such ties, even after they had become a little irksome; but in this instance any regrets I may have felt were lessened by the immediate certainty of a desirable change. I was like a plant that had outgrown its environment, and exhausted the soil which had for a season sufficed for its nourishment; and the very roots of my being rejoiced in the prospect of transplantation.

I saw little of the Childs after the separation, and soon lost track of them altogether. I often

wondered what had become of the doctor, with his eyewater, and his pencil-case engraving, so incompatible with his English dignity, and of domestic Mrs. Child, with her dear little dropped *h*'s, — into what haven they could have drifted, out of the fierce currents of our American life, which they seemed so incompetent to cope with; but I never knew, until, some five and twenty years afterwards, a tall, elderly gentleman, with grizzled locks, and of rather distinguished appearance, sought me out, in Arlington. It was my old friend the doctor. He had come to make me a friendly visit; but it seemed that it was, after all, partly woman's curiosity that had sent him; Mrs. Child having charged him not to pass through Boston, where he had business, without learning for a certainty if J. T. Trowbridge, the writer, and so forth, was the person of the same name who, when little more than a boy, had engraved pencil-cases and sat up late nights over his books and manuscripts in the Jersey City cottage. I was gratified to learn that they had found a port of peace, into which Providence itself seemed to have guided their bark, after many vicissitudes of storm and calm. They had at last found their proper place in an Old Peoples' Home, or some such institution, in Baltimore, not as dependent inmates, I was glad to know, but as superintendent and matron. I

could hardly imagine a more ideal position for him with his affable manners and mild dignity, and for her with her strict domestic economy, — not too strict, I trust, for the inmates under their charge. Another quarter of a century, and more, has swept by since the doctor's visit, and the two must long since have fallen in with the procession of those who have entered that Home, from the world of struggle and failure, and, after a sojourn more or less brief in its tranquil retreat, passed on into the shadow of the Greater Peace.

VI

My Broadway landlord was M. Perrault, one of the best known members of the French colony in New York; an accomplished violinist, and leader of the orchestra at Niblo's Garden. The family was as characteristically French and Parisian as the Jersey City household had been English and provincial. Although only a lodger, I was welcomed at once to the small salon, and made to feel so much at home in it that from the first I spent much of my leisure time with the Perraults and their friends who frequented the house. The very first Sunday after my arrival I was invited to dinner, and made acquainted with French cookery, and that indispensable attendant upon it and promoter of good cheer, Bordeaux wine. There

were only four at table, the two Perraults, their son Raphael, a boy of nine, and myself, the only guest. But it was a dinner of courses, — not very expensive, I judge, and certainly neither lavish nor ostentatious; every dish simple, individual, and prepared in ways that were at once as novel to me as they were agreeable. Perrault was himself an amateur cook, of a skill that might have qualified him as a chef, if he had not been making a good income more satisfactorily by conducting Niblo's orchestra, teaching the violin, and copying scores. He was the inventor of a *sauce Perrault*, which, Madame boasted, was popular among their New York compatriots, and even had some vogue in Paris. Every few days after that, memorably on Sundays, he would come to my room and smilingly announce that he had given the finishing touches to the dinner, and had come to take me down with him, perhaps adding gentle force to urgent persuasion. If I remonstrated, "Not so soon again; you are altogether too kind!" he would assure me that my dining with them was considered by both him and Madame as a favor, and she especially would be *désolée* if I declined. Nor could I believe him in any way hypocritical; there could be no motive for their proffered hospitality but the satisfaction there was in it for them and for their guest. They were

kind-hearted, fond of society, and ardent in friendship, and if their Gallic cordiality was sometimes effusive rather than deep, it was not insincere.

I had been with them but a short time when another opportunity was opened to me, — golden, glorious, to an impecunious youth! Might Perrault have the pleasure of taking me to the theatre? When Niblo's was n't crowded he could at any time smuggle in a friend. Of course I was enchanted to accept; and well I remember the awesome mystery of the dim stage entrance, — his violin preceding him, as we passed the obliging doorkeeper, and I following, fast held by his other hand; — then the tortuous way behind the scenes and under the stage, to a seat in the front row, near the orchestra (there were no orchestra stalls in those days). The house was filling rapidly; the musicians took their places; quiet succeeded the rustle of music leaves and the tuning of instruments, and suddenly, in an instant, what there was of me was converted into a bundle of thrills from head to foot, my joy in the music quickened by the novelty of the situation and the pride I felt in Perrault's leadership.

The performance that followed was not by any means my first play; but I had never before seen a great actor in a great part. The piece was Merry Wives of Windsor, and from that coigne

of vantage, a seat in the front row, I for the first time beheld Hackett as Falstaff, to my mind then, and as I remember it still, an amazing personation of the greatest comic character on the stage. Other good acting I witnessed that season at Niblo's, under Perrault's auspices, but everything else fades in the effulgence of Falstaff, and the rainbow hues of a troupe of ballet girls that came later. Could it have been any such troupe of frilled and lithe-limbed nymphs that Carlyle saw on a London stage, and scornfully described as "mad, restlessly jumping and clipping scissors"? — those leaping and pirouetting, curving and undulating shapes, miraculous, glorified, weaving their dance, every movement timed to the strains of the orchestra, a living web of beauty and music! For such indeed they were — not jumping scissors, in whirling inverted saucers! — to my dewy adolescence.

Among the advantages enjoyed in my new lodging, I must not omit a large miscellaneous collection, mostly in paper covers, of the works of French authors. It was not lacking in the earlier classics, but it was especially rich in the productions of contemporary writers, novelists, dramatists, poets, then at the zenith of their celebrity, or nearing it, — Sue, Balzac, Victor Hugo, George Sand, and her confrère, Jules Sandeau, Lamar-

tine, Dumas, Scribe, Soulié, and a long list beside. These I read indiscriminately and with avidity, in days of discouragement and forced leisure, while waiting for my accepted articles to appear, or for others to be accepted by the periodicals I was writing for. My solitude was peopled and my loneliness soothed by a world of fictitious characters in Monte Christo and Les Trois Mousquetaires (I wish I could read them now, or anything else, with such zest!), Le Juif Errant (I had my own choice copy of Les Mystères de Paris), Hugo's Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné, George Sand's Indiana, and, among others not least, Scribe's Pequillo Alliaga, a romance of adventure, eclipsed by the number and popularity of the author's dramas, but worthy, I then thought (I wonder what I should think now), to take rank with Le Sage's Gil Blas. Perrault was a scoffer at superstition and prudery (I shrink from saying religion and virtue, which might perhaps be nearer exactitude), and he did not mind the risk of corrupting my youth by putting into my hands Voltaire's La Pucelle and Parny's La Guerre des Dieux. But the risk was not great. Something instinctive afforded me a duck-like immunity in passing through puddles.

VII

It might have been possible for me to live by writing stories at one dollar a page or two dollars and a half a chapter, if I could have got them published after they were accepted or paid for when published. To widen my field, and secure, as I hoped, better compensation, I sent an essay to the Knickerbocker, then the foremost literary periodical in the country. It quickly appeared in those elegant pages, to which Irving and his compeers had given character; and full of confidence in this new vehicle for my productions, I went one morning to call on the polite editor. He received me cordially, appeared somewhat surprised at my youth, and assured me that the covers of his magazine would always be elastic enough to make room for such papers as that which I had given him. "Given" him, I found it was in a quite literal sense, for when I hinted at the subject of compensation, he smilingly informed me that it was not his custom to pay for the contributions of new writers. As he had rushed my essay into print without notifying me of its acceptance, or consulting me as to the signature I wished to have attached to it, and as I had purposely withheld the pseudonym under which I was writing for less literary periodicals, and had not yet begun to write

under my own name, he had published it anonymously, so that I did not even have the credit of being a contributor to Knickerbocker. I was then using chiefly the pseudonym of Paul Creyton, which I kept for some years for two reasons, — first, because I was well aware of my work being only that of a 'prentice hand, and wished to reserve my own name for more mature compositions ; and, second, as Paul Creyton grew in popularity, I found an ever increasing advantage in retaining so good an introduction to editors and readers. If I had put off using my own name until I was confident of doing my best work, I might never have used it ; so that, as it seems to me now, I might as well have begun using it from the first, — or rather, a modified form of it, writing it Townsend Trowbridge, omitting the J. or John for greater distinctiveness, and to avoid confusion of identity with any other Trowbridge.

I can hardly remember now what periodicals I wrote for, or what I wrote ; but one story I recall, which I should probably have forgotten with the rest, if it had not come to light again, like a lost river, a few years later. It was a novelette in three or four installments, that was accepted by the Manhattan Flashlight (although that was not the name of the paper) with such unexampled promptitude, and in a letter so polite, complimen-

tary, and full of golden promise, that once more the tide in my affairs seemed at the flood. Or nearly so; each installment was to be liberally paid for when published, and the first would be put into the printer's hands immediately upon my acceptance of the editorial terms. Accept them I did with joyful celerity; then, having waited two or three weeks, I called at the publication office, only to find the door locked, and the appalling notice staring me in the face, "To Let — Inquire Room below." At "room below" I inquired with a sick heart, "What has become of the Flashlight?" and was told that it had "gone out." The proprietor had decamped, leaving behind him nothing but debts; and I could neither come upon his trail nor recover my manuscript.

Two or three years afterward a Boston editor asked me how it chanced that I was writing a continued story for a certain New York weekly paper of a somewhat questionable character; a paper I had never heard of before. It was my lost river reappearing in the most unexpected of desert places. I wrote to the publisher for explanations, and after a long and harassing delay was informed that he had received my manuscript with the assets of some business he had bought out (not the Flashlight), that I must look to his predecessor for redress, and that he would be

pleased to receive from me another story as good! He must have been lacking in a sense of humor, or he would have added "on the same terms." Redress from any source was of course out of the question.

About this time, in Boston, I knew of a similar adventure befalling a story by an author of world-wide reputation. After the publication of The Scarlet Letter had made "the obscurest man of letters in America" one of the most famous, the gloomy but powerfully impressive story of Ethan Brand, which was written several years before, and had lain neglected in the desks of unappreciative editors, appeared as "original" in the columns of the Boston Literary Museum. Knowing the editor, I hastened to inquire of him how he had been able to get a contribution from Hawthorne. Complacently puffing his cigar, he told me it had come to him from some other office, where it had been "knocking around," that he did n't suppose it had ever been paid for, and that he had printed it without consulting the author. He rather expected to hear from him, but he never did; and it is quite probable that Hawthorne never knew of the illicit publication. He must have kept a copy of the strayed Ethan Brand, which not long after appeared in authorized form elsewhere.

Among the few friends who used to climb to my third-story room on Broadway was old Major Noah, whom I can remember flushed and puffing like another Falstaff, as he sank into a chair after ascending those steep flights. He would stop on his way downtown, to give me a kindly greeting, and to inquire about my prospects; he also gave me a little work to do in the way of translation from the French. He once brought me a volume of Paris sketches, from which, not reading the language himself, he desired me to select and translate for him such as I deemed best suited to the latitude of New York. The surprising similarity of the life of the two cities was exemplified by the fact that the translations I made were printed with but few changes in the columns of the Sunday Times, and served quite as well for New York as for Paris. I quickly caught the trick of adaptation, and soon had the pleasure of seeing those social satires appear in the Major's paper (anonymously, of course), with many local touches I had given them before they passed under his experienced pen.

VIII

Another good friend I had was Archibald McLees, an expert line and letter engraver, and a man of very decided literary tastes. I found his

shop a delightful lounging place ; seated on a high stool, with his steel plate before him, in white light, he would talk with me of Dickens and Scott, Béranger and Molière, turning now and then from his work, with an expressive look over his shoulder, to give point to some story, or a quotation from Sam Weller. We dined together at the restaurants, took excursions together (he knew the city like a native), and once went together to sit for our phrenological charts in the office of the Fowlers. The younger Fowler made a few hits, in manipulating our craniums ; but on coming away, we concluded that, except for the names written on our respective charts, it would have been difficult to distinguish one from the other. McLees had as much literary ability as I, according to the scale of numbers ; while I seemed fully his equal in artistic taste and mechanic skill. As the object I had chiefly in view, in consulting a phrenologist, was to get some outward evidence of my aptitude for the career I had chosen, the result was disappointing. Fowler's first words, in placing his hand on my forehead — "This brain is always thinking — thinking — thinking!" — led me to expect a striking delineation ; but I afterwards reflected that, like other remarks that followed, they would have applied equally well to any number of heads that passed under his obser-

vation. He made a correct map of the country, yet quite failed to penetrate the life of the region, or to take into account the electric and skyey influences which, quite as much as the topographical conformation, cause each to differ from any other. About this time I went with a young man of my acquaintance to attend one of Fowler's lectures. My friend was a rather commonplace fellow, but he had a massive frontal development, and Fowler, who singled him out from the audience and called him to the platform for a public examination, gave him a Websterian intellect. Websterian faculties he may have had, yet he somehow lacked the spirit needful to give them force and character. The mill was too big for the water power.

I kept up a correspondence with McLees for some time after I left Boston; a circumstance I had quite forgotten until one of his sons informed me, not long ago, that the family still preserves letters of mine written to him (O delicious salad days!) in French. I have no wish to see them.

IX

I carried out heroically enough my plan of retrenching in other ways to offset, when necessary, my increased room rent. This necessity came not very long after my installment at Perrault's.

I stopped buying books, but that was no great sacrifice as long as I had access to shelves crowded with the most attractive French authors; and an evening now and then at Niblo's made it easy for me to forego other places of amusement. Then I could enjoy a band concert any fine summer evening sitting at my open window.

To keep myself comfortable and presentable in the matter of dress was always my habit; I bought nothing on credit (probably I could n't have done otherwise if I had tried); and I should have felt dishonored if ever my laundress delivered her bundle and went away unpaid. So that there remained only one direction in which my expenditures could be much curtailed.

I had begun with three meals a day at the restaurants, which I soon reduced to two, then a few weeks later to one, and finally on a few occasions to none at all. I did n't starve in the mean while; on the contrary I lived well enough to keep myself in the condition of excellent (although never very robust) health, which I enjoyed at all seasons, and at whatever occupation, through all my early years. Hungry I may have been at times, but no more so, probably, than was good for me, and never for long. When I could n't afford a meal at the restaurants I would smuggle a sixpenny loaf up my three flights and into my room

(I was ashamed of this forced economy), with perhaps a little fruit or a wedge of cheese. This I might have found hard fare, and unsatisfactory, had it not been sauced with something that made up for the lack of luxuries : a pure and wholesome light wine, *vin ordinaire*, which through Perrault I could get in the store downstairs at the importer's price of a shilling a bottle (twelve and a half cents). With a glass of this I could always make a palatable meal off my loaf and fruit ; the worst feature being the solitariness of it, and the absence of that which renders a frugal repast better than a banquet without it, friendly converse at table. In this respect the restaurant was not much better, except when I had a companion at dinner, which was n't always convenient ; so that I soon became weary enough of this unsocial way of living. Sometimes I hardly knew where the next loaf was coming from ; but then I would get pay for an article in time to keep me from actual want and out of debt ; or I would raise money in another way that I shrink from mentioning, not from any feeling of false pride at this distant day, but on account of the associations the memory of it calls up.

When necessity pressed, I would take from my modest collection the volumes I could best spare, and dispose of them at a second-hand bookstore

for about one quarter what they had cost me, yet generally enough for the day's need. One night I even passed under the ill-omened sign, that triple emblem of avarice, want, and woe, the pawnbroker's three balls; an occasion rendered memorable to me by a painful circumstance. I parted with a flute that I had paid two dollars and a half for when I had a boyish ambition to become a player, and which I was glad to pledge for the cost of a dinner when I had given up the practice and did n't expect ever to resume it. The money-lender's cage had two wickets opening into the narrow entry-way; while I paused at one of these, the slight, shrinking figure of a woman all in black came to the other, and pushed in, over the worn and greasy counter, a bundle which the ogre behind the bars shook out into a gown of some dark stuff, glanced at disapprovingly, refolded, and passed back to her with a sad shake of the head. She had probably named a sum that did not appeal to his sense of what was businesslike; and she now said something else in a choked voice, in reply to which he once more took in the garment, and gave her in return a ticket, with a small coin. A wing of the little stall where she stood had concealed her face from me while she was transacting her sorrowful business, but I had a full look at it as she went out,

and so pinched with penury and wrung with distress did it appear, that a horribly miserable and remorseful feeling clutched at my vitals, as if I were somehow implicated in her calamity, and ought to put into her hand the two or three shillings (whatever the sum may have been) that I had received for the flute. I should have been happier if I had done so. I was young, stout-hearted, patient with ill fortune, if not quite defiant of it, and sustained by the certainty that my need was as temporary as it was trivial; while hers, as I fancied, was a long-drawn desolation that only death could end. Her image haunted me, and for many days and nights I could never pass a pawnbroker's sign without feeling that clutch at my heart.

The band concert I have spoken of should also be enumerated among the advantages of my Perrault lodging. Opposite my room, but a block or two farther down Broadway, was the Café des Mille Colonnes, a brilliant house of entertainment, with a balcony on which an orchestra used to play, on summer evenings, the popular airs of the period, to which I listened many a lonely hour, sitting by the window of my unlighted chamber, "thinking — thinking — thinking!" The throngs of pedestrians mingled below, moving (marvelous to conceive) each to his or her "separate business

and desire;" the omnibuses and carriages rumbled and rattled past; while, over all, those strains of sonorous brass built their bridge of music, from the high café balcony to my still higher window ledge, spanning joy and woe, sin and sorrow, past and future, all the mysteries of the dark river of life. Night after night were played the same pieces, which became so interwoven with the thoughts of my solitary hours, with all my hopes and doubts, longings and aspirations, that for years afterward I could never hear one of those mellow, martial, or pensive strains without being immediately transported back to my garret and my crust.

X

I wonder a little now at the courage I kept up, a waif (as I seemed often to myself) in the great, strange city, a mere atom in all that multitudinous human existence. I do not remember that, even at the lowest ebb of my fortunes, I ever once lost faith in myself, or a certain philosophical cheerfulness that enabled me then, as it has always since, to bear uncomplainingly my share of rebuffs and discouragements; I never once succumbed to homesickness or thought of returning to my furrows. I have only grateful recollections of those times of trial, which no doubt had their use in tempering my too shy and sensitive nature, and in deepening my inward resources.

This way of living could not have continued long before it was relieved by a change as welcome as it was unexpected. Although I managed somehow to pay my room rent when due, the Perraults must have suspected my impecuniosity, for their invitations became more and more frequent, until I found myself dining with them three or four times a week. If this hospitality had meant only social enjoyment and a solace to my solitude, it would have been pure satisfaction; but it had for me, moreover, a money-saving significance that touched my self-respect. So I remarked one day, as I took my customary seat at their table, that I could n't keep on dining with them so often unless they would consent to take me as a boarder. Before this they had declared that they would not receive a boarder for any consideration; I had now, however, come to be regarded as one of the family, and they readily acceded to my proposal. One of the family I then indeed became, and as intimate a part of their French ménage as I had been of the English household in Jersey City.

It was a rather rash arrangement on my part, for the terms agreed upon, though moderate enough in view of the more generous way of living, made my weekly expenses nearly double what they had been at Dr. Child's or in Duane Street, and this at a time when I had only a vague notion as to

how I was to meet them. That my horror of debt should have permitted me to rush into this indiscretion is something I can hardly explain. Circumstance led me a better way than prudence would have approved; I obeyed one of those impulses that seem often to be in the private counsels of Providence, and are wiser than wisdom. I had had enough of the restaurants, and bread eaten in secret had ceased to be pleasant. I felt no compunctions in exchanging those useful experiences for French café au lait and French cookery, a more regular home life, and daily good cheer.

I became more at ease in my mind as to money obligations; and from that time I do not remember to have had much difficulty in meeting them. The Perraults trusted me implicitly, and were always willing to await my convenience when my weekly reckonings fell in arrears. Perrault overflowed with good-fellowship, and with a vivacity akin to wit; and Madame had but one serious fault,— that which accounted for her too rubicund complexion. Quite too often, after the midday lunch, poor little Raphael was sent downstairs with her empty bottle, to be filled at the wineshop below with something more ardent than Bordeaux or Burgundy. I was fain to go out when I saw the cognac come in, to take its place beside snuff-box and tumbler, on her sitting-room table; but

would sometimes be persuaded to sit with her while she sipped and talked, and took snuff and grew drowsy, and then perhaps in the midst of a sentence dropped asleep in her chair, to awaken not seldom in an ill temper that vented itself on poor little Raphael if he chanced to be near. At other times she would be as indulgently good to him as became a mother; and me she always treated with the utmost courtesy and kindness. I never had a word of disagreement with her save on a single topic; in the discussion of which she herself unconsciously presented a living argument on my side, — an argument, however, that I could not with propriety adduce. I would never unite with her in lowering the contents of the bottle.

XI

Meanwhile I was enjoying increased facilities for acquiring a colloquial familiarity with the French language. When I entered the house I could read and translate it readily enough, and I had gained a good accent from my French-Canadian teacher in Lockport; but I spoke it stiffly and bookishly, and it was difficult for me to follow a rapid and careless enunciation. In a company of French-speaking people I would lose a large part of the conversation that was not addressed directly to me. But I was passing happily

through that transitional stage, and getting a practical use of the language that was to be of inestimable value to me all my life. I may add here my belief that in no other language is the disadvantage so great of having first learned it by the eye only, and not by the ear ; often in such a case the ear never quite catches up with the eye in understanding it.

I was so well satisfied with my later domestic arrangements that I rested in the comfortable feeling that they would continue indefinitely. But they were to be suddenly interrupted.

I had been with the Perraults only about five months as a lodger, and the latter half of that time as a boarder, when another of those circumstances that override our plans took me away from them and from the city. In August of that year, 1848, — fifteen months after landing on the pier, early that May morning, from the North River boat, — by the advice of a literary acquaintance I made a trip to Boston, chiefly for the purpose of securing new vehicles for my tales and sketches, in the periodical press outside of New York. My cheery "Au revoir!" to my French host and hostess proved to be a final farewell. I found the latitude of Boston so hospitable to those light literary ventures that I prolonged my stay, and what was at first intended as a visit became a permanent residence.

Thus ended, before I was yet twenty-one, the New York episode of my youth. I had not accomplished what I secretly hoped to do, I had passed through trials and humiliations, and tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But I had come out of the ordeal with courage and purpose undiminished, a heart unscathed by temptation and unembittered by disappointment. My first stumbling steps were no doubt better for my discipline and right progress than the leap I vaguely aspired to make at the outset. It is well that we cannot always bend the world to our will; and I long since learned to be thankful that no publisher was found undiscerning enough to print my first thin volume of very thin verse.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY YEARS IN BOSTON

I

"TAKE me to a good boarding-place," I said to the cabman who picked me up on my arrival in Boston that morning in August, 1848; and he set me down at No. 33 Brattle Street, in an ancient, unattractive quarter of the city. Indeed, all that part of Boston through which our wheels rattled over the rough cobble-stone pavements impressed me as unattractive, if not ancient; and I could n't help comparing the narrow, crooked streets, into the midst of which I was whirled and dropped, with Broadway, which my windows had looked out on for the last five months, and to which I had grown strongly attached.

"Never mind," I said to myself consolingly; "I shall stay here only a couple of weeks."

No. 33 was near the lower end of the street, three or four doors from the Quincy House, which popular hostelry has long since taken in that and other adjoining brick buildings in its successive extensions. Just beyond that was the old Brattle

BRATTLE STREET CHURCH

Showing cannon-ball

Street Church, which had quartered a British regiment during the siege of Boston, and still showed conspicuously, imbedded in the masonry over the door, the twenty-four pound iron ball, from a rebel cannon at Cambridge, that struck the brick front the night before the evacuation.

The boarding-house was kept by Mrs. Kittredge, a widow, who received me with such motherly kindness and made me so comfortable that I felt well satisfied to pass there the days of my exile from the Perrault ménage and French cookery, while seeing the city and transacting my business with the editors. The longer I stayed in Boston the better I liked it. I quickly discovered the harbor and the two rivers that united to form it; the Common, like a patch of beautiful country on the skirt of the town, and the Public Garden beyond, then a garden only in name, an unfilled lower level, with made land and raised streets on three sides, and a broad embankment on the fourth, fronting Charles River, and fencing out the tides. That embankment presented an attractive walk.

I found the Boston weeklies ready to accept about everything I had to offer, and set gleefully to work to furnish the sort of contributions most in demand. "Stories, give us stories!" said they all; and stories they had from me from that time

forth. The pay was small, indeed, but I had no longer any difficulty in getting my articles published. The most flourishing of these papers paid its writers only two dollars a column, or one hundred dollars for a novelette running through ten or twelve numbers. Some paid only half those rates, while others kept to "the good old rule, the simple plan," of paying very little, or nothing at all, relying for contributions upon amateurs who were not only eager to write for nothing, but who aided largely in the support of at least one so-called "magazine," by interesting their friends to subscribe for it, or to buy the issues containing their articles.

So I settled down for the fall and winter in Boston, and with deep regret wrote to the Perraults, giving up the room they had retained for me, and sending for such effects as I had left in their keeping. Thus closed my twenty-first year.

II

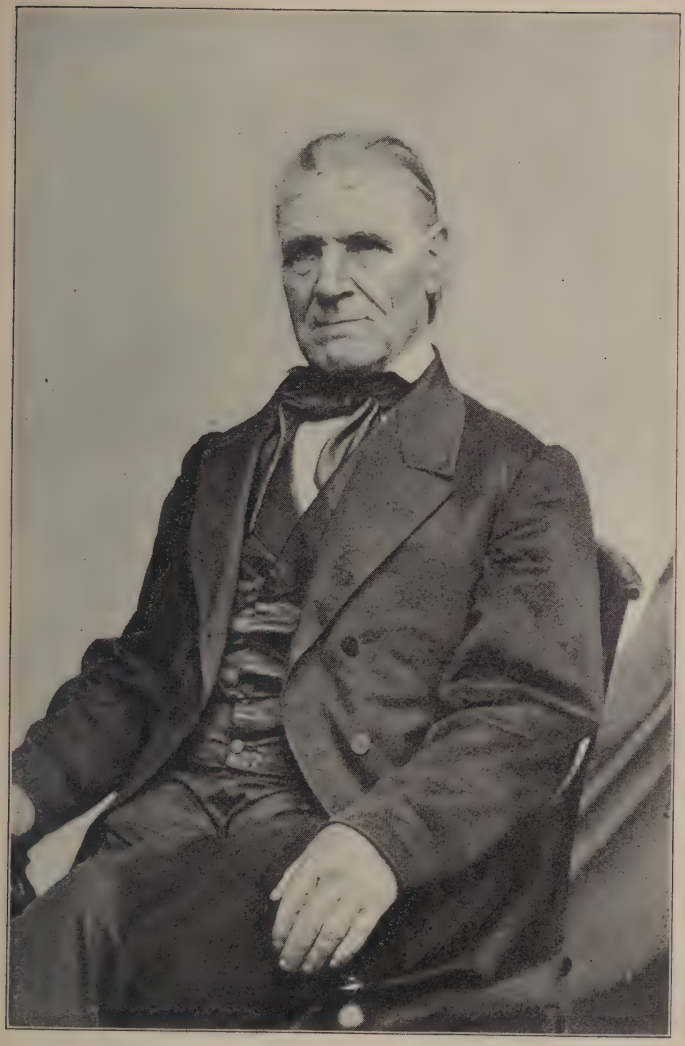
One of the best of the Boston weeklies of those days was the Olive Branch, a semi-religious family paper, to which I became a frequent contributor, and to the readers of which I became so favorably known that in the summer following, 1849, I was invited to join a party in an excursion to Moosehead Lake, with the understanding that

I was to write for that paper letters descriptive of the region visited, then in the heart of the wilds of Maine. I was ever ready for any adventure, and few things could have delighted me more than the prospect of this one, in which I was to see strange scenery, with agreeable companions, and find, among the woods and waters of that wilderness, congenial subjects for my pen. I have quite forgotten to what steamboat, or stagecoach, or hotel interest I owed this privilege; it was probably a combination of such interests; for, as I remember, I had no fares or other expenses to pay during the two or three weeks of that memorable journey.

Among my fellow travelers there were two of whom I cherish an affectionate remembrance. These were old Father Taylor, the pulpit orator, and Mrs. Taylor. He was then in the meridian of his powers, one of Boston's celebrities, and a striking personality. I had heard him preach at the Seaman's Bethel, not because I cared much for preachers and sermons, — not having then recovered from the aversion to them with which my early experience had inspired me, — but because nobody in those days could be said to have seen Boston who had not seen and heard Father Taylor. His sermons were never learned or dogmatic, but wonderfully earnest and direct, often

illustrated by quaint nautical metaphors (he had followed the sea in his youth), and enforced by a "terrible gift of familiarity" that brought him heart to heart with his hearers. These were largely composed of men from the wharves and ships, with their families and friends, to whom he did incalculable good, in shaping their paths toward sober and righteous living.

He was then near sixty years old, but his seamed and tawny visage made him appear much older; rather short of stature, but active, and as full of enthusiasm as a boy. He was certainly a more ardent fisherman than the youngest member of the party; for, as I recall, when our little Moosehead steamboat swung around under the stupendous overhanging rock of Mt. Kineo, and, having once looked up in awe and astonishment, I turned to witness the effect on Father Taylor, I beheld him, not gazing upward at all, but down at the water, with rod in hand, watching his line, which he had flung over for a bite as soon as the paddles were still. He joined in the camping-out and moose-hunting by night, and was as eager as any of us to get a shot at the noble game, as our deftly paddled canoes glided into the mouth of some stream, and we heard the clash of boughs where the animals crossed or came to drink, but never within range of our guns.



EDWARD T. TAYLOR (FATHER TAYLOR)

The fame of the great preacher's advent went abroad in the wilderness, and drew a large concourse of people to hear him when he preached from the deck of the steamer at Greenville, the Sunday after our arrival. "It seemed" (to quote his own words) "as if God had shaken the woods and hills to bring his people together." I remained to note the strange audience that had gathered from nobody appeared to know where — pioneer settlers and wood-choppers, hunters and trappers and guides, half-breeds and Indians, stage-drivers, steamboat-men and tourists, with many women and children; — then, having heard enough of the sermon to write a notice of it, I stole away to my room in the hotel to indite my Olive Branch letter.

It was known to the members of our party that I did not stay through the services, and it occasioned some comment, which I regretted, fearing to wound my venerable friend, not in his ministerial vanity, if he had any, but by inspiring in him a pious concern for my soul. That "concern" was a subject which, in my boyhood, I had conceived an invincible repugnance to hearing discussed; and I congratulated myself that in all our daily intercourse since we left Boston, Father Taylor had never once inquired whether I had met with a change of heart. He would probably

now infer that I had not. That Sunday evening, after I had finished and folded my letters, a rap came upon my door, and I could hardly have told whether I was pleased or disturbed, as, on opening it, I met the genial but serious countenance of the old preacher.

"Young man," he said, "it 's a fine evening, and I want a little walk and talk with you. Will you come?"

"With pleasure!" I responded; and it was with pleasure indeed that I strolled and conversed with him, during the summer twilight hour, on the wild and lonely shore of the lake. He inquired about my boyhood and my life in Boston, and talked of our trip, yet never once edged toward the topic I dreaded to have introduced. At last, as we were returning to the hotel, he said, —

"Young man, there 's one thing I want to impress upon you. There 's nothing like being prepared." He paused and confronted me, with the twilight gleam from the clear sky and the reflection from the water lighting his benign countenance, furrowed by long experience of the world's sins and woes. "We are enjoying a blessed opportunity, and must make the most of it. We are to take an early start up the lake in the morning, and what I suggest is that we should have our fishing-tackle, bait, everything needed for the

day s sport, on board the steamboat before breakfast."

How I loved the dear old man at that moment!

During the summer my mother came on from Western New York to visit me in Boston. I met her in Framingham, my father's birthplace, where we had relatives, and brought her back with me to my Brattle Street boarding-house. I had resolved not to go home until I was assured of success in my chosen vocation; and she had not seen me for over two years. It had been my habit to send her everything I wrote, and to keep her constantly informed as to my varying fortunes, so that she felt but little concern regarding my moral and material circumstances; but she yearned to behold her "absent child" once more, and to see with her own eyes how he was living and the kind of company he kept. She appeared contented with me in every respect, except that she wished I would go to church more regularly and "write more poetry." She stayed with me a few days at No. 33, and we did not meet again for another two years.

III

Among our Brattle Street boarders was Charles Chadwick, a native of Nantucket, who, like Father Taylor, had seen much of the world's sins and

woes, but from a different moral point of view. He wore a blue broadcloth swallow-tail coat, with metal buttons (high style in those days), and was always carefully groomed, from his blond hair combed sleekly over his full, low forehead, to his well-polished boots. He had a noticeable stoop in his shoulders, and another peculiarity not so noticeable, but which I discovered when I helped him off with his boots, on a memorable occasion. There was only bare skin visible inside of them; he had never worn socks since he ran away to sea at sixteen, and, he assured me, he never had cold feet. He was extremely social, and an entertaining humorist and story-teller, qualities that attracted me from the first; and as he flattered me with his attentions (he was twice my age), we soon became friends.

He called himself a "ship-broker." When I asked what a ship-broker did, he told me he was just then trying to sell, for its owner, an old brigantine that had once been "turned out to grass," but which had latterly been repaired and fitted up for the voyage around Cape Horn; the newly developed California "gold craze" having produced a scarcity of vessels suitable for that trip. He was asking eleven thousand dollars for the brigantine; and, as he further informed me, if he found a purchaser at that price, his commission would

amount to eleven hundred. I thought it would n't take many such sales during the year to insure a ship-broker, of no very extravagant habits, a respectable livelihood.

I was quite astonished therefore when he one day imparted to me confidentially the fact that he was temporarily a "little short," and that he would be ever so much obliged if I would lend him fifty dollars! I replied that I had n't more than half that sum in the world. I was getting not more than one or two short articles a week published and paid for; and while this was better than I had been doing at one time, my expenditures had proportionally increased.

By no means discouraged, he replied: "It 's low water with me now, and twenty-five will tide me over a few days, probably until I can close the dicker for the brigantine. Fact is, my board bill is in the doldrums, and I 've got to raise the wind somehow!"

I never could withstand an appeal of that sort, and after some demurring, I ended by doing as I had done in the case of my earlier friend, Dr. Child; I gave him all the money I could conveniently get together, although I saw no advantage to myself in the transaction, but considerable risk. It seems a curious circumstance to me now, that one impecunious as I often was should have

been a frequent lender of small sums, but never a borrower. These sums were usually repaid, although I recall one boon companion, who held a clerkship in the office of the collector of the port, receiving a salary amounting to three times my modest income, yet who was chronically "dead broke," and was always borrowing omnibus fares and other trifles, too insignificant ever to be mentioned again between friends. Another carried his borrowing practices so far as to go to my room in my absence, and help himself to my linen. When he said to me once, apologetically, "I suppose you were surprised that I didn't return that shirt I borrowed;" I replied, "Not at all; I should have been surprised if you *had* returned it." After I had been so far prospered as to be able to place a small deposit in a savings-bank, the father of a family once besought me for a loan of sixty dollars. When I told him, to my sincere regret, that I had no such sum at command, he made answer that his quarter's rent was due, that he had been unable to collect some bills he had relied on to make up the needful sum, and he did n't know which way to turn, if I could n't help him.

"I have n't it," I repeated; "but" — I thought of my poor little savings-bank deposit, and of a family man's natural distress on being unable to pay his rent — "I might possibly raise it for you."

Although I knew there would be a loss of accumulated and prospective interest if I withdrew my money from the bank, and I could not think of taking interest from a friend, his expressions of gratitude paid me in advance for any such sacrifice. I went at once and drew the sixty dollars, which I handed him without saying how I had come by it. Here paid me in a week or two, thanked me warmly, and added this naïve remark: —

"If you had n't lent me the money, I should have had to take it out of the savings-bank, and have lost the interest."

I smiled, and held my peace. There are pleasanter experiences than to have one's satisfaction in a friendly act dashed by the discovery that one's good-nature has been imposed upon, or that one has been too weakly obliging.

IV

Such, however, was not my experience with the ship-broker. I loaned him more money when I had it, and was useful in keeping his board bills, at least, out of the "doldrums," until he came to me one evening in my room, in a flush of excitement. The dicker for the brigantine had been closed, the money paid over, and he had got his commission. He took from his pocket a fat roll of banknotes, counted out his debt to me on my

writing-table, in the lamplight, and vowed eternal gratitude and friendship for the accommodation; with more effusion of speech and moisture of the eyes than seemed to me quite necessary, or befitting the occasion. In my innocence I deemed the success of his sale sufficient to account for the glow he was in; but I did not yet know Chadwick.

"I 've waited an unconscionable while for this let-up," he said, "and now we 're going to celebrate it." What he really said was, "cerebrate it;" for I noticed that his tongue was a little thick. "Come along out!" and he clutched me by the arm.

When I asked what he proposed to do, he said he was going to take me to see somebody in "Macbeth;" but that we had time to "splice the main brace" first. Then the truth dawning upon me, I remarked, "You have spliced the main brace once or twice already!"

"That 's straight as a handspike!" he admitted. "I 've kept steady as a Chinese junk for over two months, and now it 's time to shake out a reef or two." He used nautical metaphors, especially when he was "cerebrating," as freely as old Father Taylor did in his sermons, but to a different purpose.

Finding it impossible to persuade him either to remain with me or to go directly to the theatre,

leaving the main brace without further splicing, I accompanied him, very reluctantly, with an unquiet feeling that he was to be taken care of and brought safely home ; and — to be brief, omitting details, it was the closing incident of that night's too wild and lurid experience, that the absence of socks became apparent, on the pulling off of his boots. One of us went to bed sober, but that one was not the man from Nantucket. He had had what he called a "cruise."

Cruises of this kind were, I found, periodic with him, though of not very frequent occurrence. I never again attempted to steer his course in one of them, or to bring him into haven, when he had his "three sheets in the wind." It was undoubtedly this unfortunate habit that had separated him from his family (he was a married man), and hindered him from that success in life which his talents and social qualities might otherwise have attained.

It did not, however, hinder him from following up the brigantine business with another venture of a maritime character, in which I became especially interested. He found a moneyed partner to join him in fitting out on their own account a vessel, the Minerva Jones, for the voyage around the Horn ; he avowed his intention of sailing in her, and offered me a free passage if I would go

with him. I gladly accepted, believing I could do well by writing letters for the Olive Branch and other Boston papers, and gain a useful experience, even if I failed to make a fortune in the California gold fields. I have often wondered what would have been the effect on me and my literary work if I had gone to the Pacific Coast at that early day.

The Minerva Jones was advertised for freight and passengers, and the date of sailing announced. I shaped all my plans for sailing in her, looking forward with hope and glee to the sea voyage and strange adventures in a new land. The day arrived, and the Minerva Jones still lay at the wharf, awaiting freight and passengers that were for some reason slow in occupying her hold and berths. There were repeated postponements, and I remember that Chadwick had to board one of his passengers for some weeks at a hotel, and keep him entertained, in order not to lose him and his merchandise, which had already been got aboard. When at last the Minerva Jones actually swung off into the stream, I had engaged in another enterprise, that detained me, for good or ill, in Boston. Thus I missed my chance of becoming a "forty-niner."

Chadwick also remained behind, but went to California later; and when next I heard from him,

through a friend who knew him in San Francisco, he had "made a fortune and lost it." He was then past sixty, and it was late in life for him to make another. I fear it was thenceforward "low water" with him, and that all the voyage of his life was

"Bound in shallows and in miseries."

But there is a tide that flows at last for all.

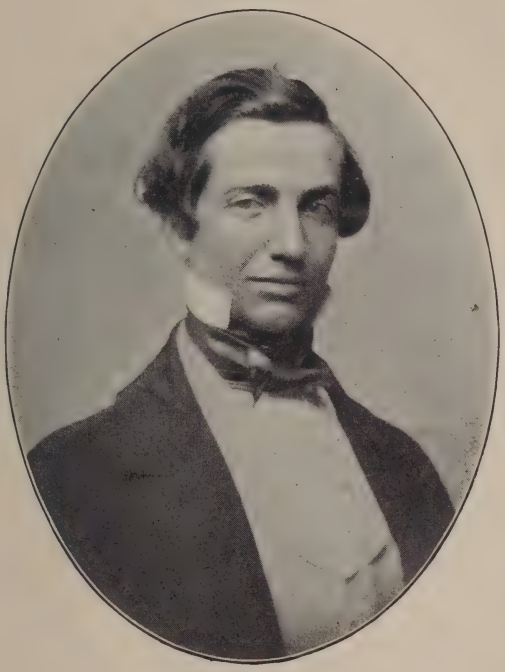
Twenty-five years after the Minerva Jones incident, the chief actor in it reappeared, not to my outward eyes but to my inward consciousness, and became a vivid presence, while I sketched his sometimes too vivacious and convivial traits in the minor novel, Fast Friends. I described a few of his actual jocosities and improvidences and invented others in keeping, shifting the scene from our "No. 33" to my old Duane Street boarding-place in New York. In writing fiction I could never hold back my fancy from expanding and idealizing a character taken from life; and in the development of this story Manton, put on the easel for Chadwick, became a suggestion rather than a portrait.

V

The enterprise that kept me in Boston was a new weekly paper, for which two other parties furnished the capital and I (as they were pleased to term it) the "brains." For reasons of policy

they preferred to be "silent partners" as far as the use of their names was concerned. One was interested in another publication of which the new paper was to be in some sense a rival. The third party was Hotchkiss & Co., newsdealers, who could not give their imprint to the new sheet without danger of prejudicing the proprietors of numerous other publications sold over their counters. So it was determined to issue the paper under the firm name of "J. T. Trowbridge & Co." I remonstrated strongly against this, not only on account of my youth and inexperience (I was then barely twenty-two), but because I aspired to be known solely as a writer. However, as I could still keep my *nom de plume* unspotted from the world of business, I suffered my judgment — and I can truly add, my modesty — to be overruled. As an equal partner I was to be entitled to one third of the profits when there were any; meanwhile I was to draw a small salary, sufficient for my living expenses, on account of my editorial work, and receive additional pay for such tales and sketches as I chose to contribute. The name of the new weekly was The Yankee Nation, a title not of my choosing.

I found in my new position other advantages than the one my friends were inclined to joke me about, —that of always having my contributions accepted.



J. T. TROWBRIDGE

At the age of 21

It afforded me, indeed, an independence of the whims of editors, and made me one of the judges on the bench before which I had hitherto appeared only in the crowd of clients more or less humble. It gave me free access to concert halls and theatres, and I was surprised and flattered when some of the great publishing houses began to send me their books for notice, and to quote The Yankee Nation as authority in advertising them. Better than all this, I had steady employment; while in the use of the office pastepot and scissors, and in reading manuscripts and proofs and conferring with contributors, I experienced at least partial relief from the hot-house process of forcing the imagination for ideas, to which the writer must often subject himself who depends for a livelihood solely upon his pen. I still wrote a great deal, however; altogether too much for my own good, I am sure, and probably for the paper's; being always ready to supply a story, long or short, or to fill space for which no fit contribution was offered. What I wrote must have been often very poor indeed, but to my mind now, as I look back, the marvel is that it was no worse.

I formed a pleasant acquaintance with contributors and friendly relations with a few. I was careful never to treat anybody with the coldness and curtness with which I had often been treated by

editors ; while, young as I was in appearance and in years, there seemed small danger of my overawing the humblest, as I had been overawed. Nevertheless, I was sometimes embarrassed by the robes of imputed dignity that invested my boyishness in the editorial chair. I recall an instance which a ghastly subsequent circumstance impressed on my memory.

VI

I had hardly had time to adjust myself to the novelty of my situation, when one morning in the latter part of November, 1849, a spare, thin-shouldered, very plainly dressed old gentleman entered the office to see about getting into the paper an article that had been left with me a short time before. It was not his own composition, but a descriptive letter from some foreign land, written by a young person in whom he was interested. It was a relief to learn that he was not a decayed author in need of earning a few dollars, as his appearance at first led me to suspect. When I handed the manuscript back to him, expressing regret that I could n't use it, he remarked deprecatingly that he did not expect to receive pay for it, even intimating that he would be willing to pay something for its insertion. As I could not accept it even on those terms, he went off with an

air of disappointment, having spoken all the while in a low tone, and treated me with a deference that mightily amused the foreman of the printing-room who witnessed the interview.

"Do you know that man?" he said excitedly. "He could buy out this shop and every other newspaper on the street, without putting his hand very deep into his pocket either!" He went on to say, "That is Dr. Parkman, one of the richest men and best-known figures in Boston!" and he laughed at the idea of his coming in that meek manner to ask me to accept a manuscript.

I was surprised, but should probably have never thought again of the incident but for the shocking circumstance already alluded to.

Dr. George Parkman was a retired physician, brother of Dr. Francis Parkman, the eminent Unitarian divine, and uncle of the younger Francis, the future historian, who was to make the name illustrious. The old doctor was reputed eccentric and close in his dealings, yet he was a philanthropist in his way; it was he who gave the land for the Harvard Medical College in Boston, and he had published a treatise on insanity and the treatment of the insane, — an author, after all, though not of the class I at first surmised. This venerable citizen went out from my office and, that day or the next, mysteriously disap-

peared, — so soon, in fact, after our interview that I fancied I must have been one of the last persons who saw him alive.

The sudden and unaccountable vanishing, in an afternoon, in an hour, of "one of the richest men and best-known figures in Boston," was the wonder of the town, until that feeling was changed to amazement and horror when his dissevered and half-destroyed remains were discovered in the laboratory of Professor John White Webster, of the Medical College. Webster had an amiable and highly esteemed family; he was a professor of chemistry, a writer on scientific subjects, and a person of high position in social and scientific circles. He was arrested, tried for the murder, and convicted. When it was too late he made a confession that might have lightened the gravamen of the charge against him if it had been made in time. According to that statement, the old doctor, on that last afternoon of his life, had come to the professor's office to collect a debt about which there had arisen some annoying difficulties, and by his overbearing insistence and angry denunciations had provoked from Webster a fatal blow. Instead of proclaiming at once the crime, committed, as he averred, in the heat of passion, Webster concealed and cut up the body, burned portions in the furnace, and had the rest in hiding, await-

ing destruction, when he was exposed by the janitor. Despite all the influences brought to bear, to save the guilty man from the gallows and his innocent family from their involvement in the hideous tragedy, the law took its course, and he was hanged on the last Friday of August, 1850. What horror and misery might have been averted (I used to think) if Dr. George Parkman had faced his debtor with something of the conciliatory meekness with which he approached the youth clothed in the brief authority of an editor's chair!

VII

The authority was even briefer than the wearer of it had reason to expect. The Yankee Nation made so good a start, and kept so prosperously afloat for five or six months, that Mr. Isaac Crooker, of Hotchkiss & Co., who had been its business manager from the outset, determined to devote to it his entire attention, and withdrew from that firm for the purpose. He took the paper as his share of the firm's assets, and bought out the third partner, thus assuming all interests except my own. He was a genial fellow worker, and our mutual relations were always as pleasant as possible; my satisfaction in the new arrangement having but one serious drawback, Mr. Crooker's uncertain health. He had a consumptive ten-

dency, which after another half year or so became so pronounced that his physician ordered him to leave all business cares behind and seek a more congenial climate. With my consent he turned over his two-thirds interest to another publisher, whose main object in acquiring it was, as it proved, to give employment to a relative, a retired minister, by placing him in the editorial chair. As there had been a tacit understanding that I was to keep the position, this was an unpleasant surprise to me. I had become accustomed to the routine work, and liked it, and was looking forward to an early sharing of profits, which had been hitherto absorbed in the expenses attending the establishment of a new publication. But as I held only a minority of the stock, I submitted to the inevitable (I could always do that with a stout heart and a smiling countenance), and walked out of the office with my few personal belongings under my arm, cheerfully giving place to my grave and reverend successor. As the chief merit of the paper — if it had any merit at all — was the vivacity the abounding good spirits of its youthful editor infused into it, and as that quality quickly evaporated under the clerical control, it failed to please its old patrons, or to attract new ones; like poor Crooker, it fell into a decline, and hardly survived him, lingering a few months longer, and then disappearing from the world's eye.

I had been but a very short time out of the editorial office when my friend Ben: Perley Poore (he always punctuated his prænomen with a colon) accosted me one day on the street in this wise:—

"You are just the man I am looking for! The Fair opens to-day" (it was one of Boston's early industrial expositions), "and I am starting a little sheet, The Mirror of the Fair, that I want you to take charge of."

"'Angels and ministers of grace'!" I exclaimed. "I know nothing about the Fair, or anything in it."

"Go in and see it," he replied, "and in fifteen minutes you will know as much about it as anybody. Write two or three short articles a day on any subject suggested; then brief comments, five or ten line paragraphs, about the most curious or interesting things you find; having our advertisers in mind, first and always."

This was the substance of his instructions, and after taking me into the Fair and introducing me to the management, he left me, as he said, "to work out my own salvation." I seem to have worked it out satisfactorily, for with the exception of the advertising columns, I wrote almost the entire contents of the little daily Mirror of the Fair as long as there was any Fair to mirror.

Poore was at that time publishing his American

Sentinel, and at the close of the Fair he offered me a position on that paper, which I was not slow to accept. I wrote for it sketches and editorials, and assisted him in the office, taking entire editorial charge of the paper in his frequent absences. It was during his absence in Washington, early in 1851, that a poor little innocent article of mine, touching satirically upon our Northern zeal in slave-catching and Southern threats of secession (burning questions then), lost it many subscribers, and, I fear, hastened its demise.

This was my last experience as an editor in those years, but not quite my last opportunity. Some time after the Sentinel incident I was called upon by the proprietor of a Boston daily, who made the astonishing proposal that I should become its editor-in-chief. Astonishing, indeed, for I had had no training in journalistic work of the kind that would be required of me. I did not believe myself fitted for it, and wondered that anybody should have conceived such an idea of my capabilities. I regarded even my connection with the weekly press as something merely temporary, all my aspirations being toward some more distinctively literary occupation. The salary offered (twice what I could hope to earn by my pen) was, I confess, a staggering temptation, as I sat for a moment gazing into the face of my visitor, almost

doubting his sanity; but I put it promptly and resolutely behind me. I might have pleaded my youth, my natural indolence, my self-distrust; above all, my insufficient knowledge of men and events. I merely said, "I could never do the necessary night work; my eyes would not permit it." This was my ostensible reason for declining the position; but, behind that, an inner Voice, irrespective of all reasons, shaped an irrevocable No.

In fact, I engaged in no other editorial work of any kind until Our Young Folks was started in 1865.

VIII

Some interesting events marked the history of Boston in those early years. I had been but a few weeks in the city when, October 25, 1848, the Cochituate water was introduced. There was a grand procession through the streets, then a celebration on the slopes of the Common overlooking the Frog Pond. An ode, written for the occasion by a brilliant young poet of Cambridge, James Russell Lowell, was sung by an immense choir of school children, and there were appropriate addresses, setting forth the benefits of the new water supply, which was to replace the antiquated wells and cisterns, and meet the needs of the growing city for an indefinite future, — the next millen-

nium, some predicted. After so much impressive preparation, Mayor Quincy smilingly asked if it was the people's will that the water should be brought in. A multitudinous, jubilant shout went up, as if it had been meant to reach the moon. The mayor's hand waved, cannon thundered, all the bells of the city clanged. As if roused by the summons, a lion-like head of tawny-maned water pushed up through the fountain's collar, seemed to hesitate a moment at the amazing spectacle of human faces, then reared and towered, in a mighty column eighty feet in height, and shook out its tumbling yellow locks in the sunset glow. The flow, turbid at first, gradually cleared, changing from dull gold to glittering silver, and the great concourse of citizens broke up, with countenances illumined as if shone upon by a miracle: even the prophets of evil, the doubters and fault-finders of the day, hardly foreseeing in how few years Boston would be clamoring for a more abundant water supply!

As I look back now, I cannot help wondering how many of those citizens yet live and recall the wild enthusiasm of the hour. Where are the happy school children who sang? Who of them survive, old men and women now, to tell the tale? Boston has since had another Mayor Quincy, grandson of him whose upraised hand set the guns

and bells dinning and the water spouting. The chief water commissioner was Nathan Hale, one of Boston's foremost citizens ; since when, a son of his, then an obscure young country minister, has shaped for himself a long and useful and distinguished career. The Cambridge poet, writer of the not over-successful ode (too long and too full of subtle and even learned allusion for the occasion, with some unsingable lines), has more than fulfilled the promise of his prime, and passed on, leaving a name high among the illustrious of the age.

The new fountain, in its varied forms, became the Common's chief attraction, adding the one needed charm of soaring and plashing water to that green pleasure ground. The surrounding slopes and malls were long my daily and nightly haunt. There I found solace for my continued exile from the country, and, especially on summer evenings, indulged my love of lonely reverie.

IX

In the last weeks of September, 1850, came Jenny Lind. The avant-courier of tempestuous excitement attending her visit made itself felt at the auction sale of seats that took place two or three days before the first concert. That morning I met on the street an acquaintance, who told me

he was going to attend the sale "just out of curiosity," and asked me to accompany him. I likewise had some curiosity to gratify; the auction sale of seats for the Swedish Nightingale's first concert in New York having produced, on a smaller scale, as lively a sensation as her singing. The first choice of seats for that first night had brought, over and above the regular price of tickets, two hundred and twenty-five dollars; the purchaser being neither a musical enthusiast nor a millionaire, but a man of business, Genin, the hatter. He had been shrewd enough to foresee the value of such an advertisement, which, Barnum tells us in his autobiography, "laid the foundation of his fortune," Genin hats, already in fashion, soon becoming the vogue in all the great Eastern cities.

Tremont Temple, in which the auction was held, was filling rapidly as we entered; a remarkable gathering of business men, newspaper men, speculators, musicians, persons of leisure of all sorts.

The bids for the first ticket began high, — $50 or $75, — and they were running up in quick jumps, when my companion said to me, "Hold my hat, Trowmridge!" (he had a way of talking through his nose), stepped up on the seat beside me, and put in a bid that distanced all the rest, —

"Two hundred and twenty-five dollars!" He had begun where Genin left off.

After that the bids mounted by fifty and twenty-five dollar leaps, the owner of the hat I held leading all competitors: "Four hundred — four hundred and fifty — five hundred — five hundred twenty-five" — to my utter amazement. I pulled his coat-tail, whispering hoarsely, "You're crazy! you're crazy, man!" but he gave no heed to any other voice crying in that wilderness than those of the auctioneer and of the one rival bidder who followed him beyond the five hundred mark.

"Six hundred!" That, after some hesitation, was the competitor's last call.

"Six hundred and twenty-five dollars!" the owner of the hat responded instantly, and stood calmly erect and expectant, until the first choice was knocked down to him at that price, amid uproarious applause. Then he smilingly reached down for his hat, waved it, bowing to the spectators as they continued to cheer him, and resumed his seat. The next choice brought a premium of only $20, and the climax of excitement was over.

"You thought I was crazy!" said the purchaser of the first ticket, as we walked away from the Temple together. "What's your opinion now?"

I had had time to think it over, and I admitted that, if the first Jenny Lind ticket in New York

was worth $225 to an advertising hatter, the first Boston ticket might be worth $625 to a man of his profession.

The purchaser of this ticket was Ossian E. Dodge, a singer of comic songs and a giver of entertainments in which he was the sole performer. His comic power consisted largely in grotesque grimaces, and the feats of a voice that could go down and down into the very sepulchres and catacombs of basso profundo, until the hearer wondered in what ventriloquial caverns it would lose itself and become a ghost of sound. He called himself a song-writer as well as a singer, and some of the published songs of the day bore the unveracious inscription, "Words and music by Ossian E. Dodge." I wrote the words of one of these, and somebody else composed the music; and I had reason to believe that all the songs he claimed as his own were produced in this vicarious manner. I may add that they were probably paid for in the same coin he dealt out to me, namely, the "ninepences" and "fourpences" of New England (the shillings and sixpences of New York and other States), which were the current small change of those days. These were taken in at the doors of his concerts, the usual price of admission to which (before Jenny Lind's advent) was ninepence, or twelve-and-a-half cents. Two

ninepences, or four fourpences, were, nominally, worth a quarter of a dollar; but as they were subject to the shrinkage of the fractional one-half or one-quarter cent, when paid out singly, nobody liked to receive them in any quantities, and the banks would take them only at a discount. Dodge, however, insisted on paying his small debts with them; a practice which I recalled when, in writing Martin Merrivale, I described Killings, in his dealings with the hero, opening a leather pouch, counting out forty smooth-worn fourpences, and tendering them to Martin on the crown of his hat. Killings, I here confess, was frankly intended as a portrait of Dodge, whose charlatanism and love of notoriety I then believed (I am not quite so sure now) made him legitimate game for my satire, after some unfairness in his treatment of me had caused a rupture between us.

The sensational purchase of the $625 ticket conjoined Dodge's name with those of Jenny Lind and her famous manager, in temporary publicity; and he lost no time in taking advantage of such advertising. Very soon was issued a well-executed lithograph representing P. T. Barnum, solid, bland, and benignant, in the act of introducing Mr. Ossian E. Dodge, smiling and elegant, to Jenny Lind, adorably gowned, and graciously bending, with her eyes modestly downcast at the

high-lights on Ossian's boots. This picture, appropriately framed, was exhibited in shop windows all over the city and in the suburbs, and it preceded the comic singer wherever his concerts were announced. He had never drawn large audiences in Boston; but his first concert there, after the Jenny Lind episode, filled Tremont Temple to its utmost capacity, at quadruple the old rates of admission, and reimbursed him in a single night for the cost of the ticket.

X

Jenny Lind, if I remember rightly, gave four concerts in Tremont Temple, in which high prices for seats were maintained ($3 to $7, plus whatever premium they would command), and afterwards two concerts, at what were called popular prices, in the immense new hall over the then recently constructed Fitchburg Railroad station. I heard her at one of the Tremont Temple concerts, and again at the first Fitchburg Hall concert, where a disastrous panic was so narrowly averted.

Anticipating a rush on the last occasion, and having invited a lady friend to accompany me, I took the precaution of going early to the hall that memorable evening, and succeeded in getting good seats on the right hand side (how well I remem-

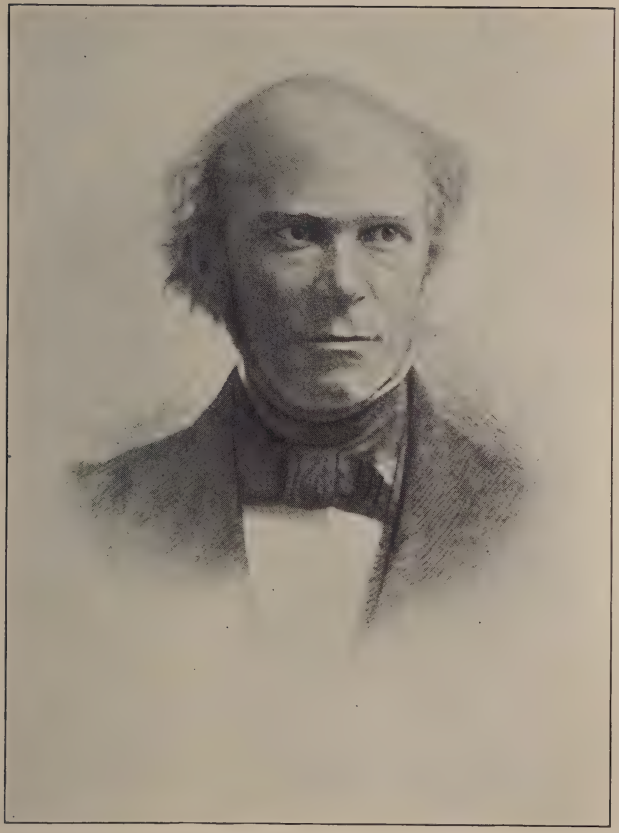
ber the exact position !) about halfway back from the stage. Soon the uproar began. The seats were not numbered, and the auditorium would accommodate only about four thousand people, while by some oversight five thousand tickets had been sold. As the throngs came pouring in, the crowding for places, the eddying and recoiling and vociferating, became frightful; and a double danger threatened, that of the floor giving way under the enormous weight imposed upon it, and of the multitude destroying itself in its own terror and frenzy. Even after the disappointed hundreds who could not get in had been turned away, and the time had passed for the opening of the concert, the tumult continued. My companion was frightened, and entreated me to take her out; and I became excited in trying to quell the excitement of others. The orchestra struck up, but its strains were drowned in the general disturbance. Somebody tried to address the audience, half of whom were on their feet, while everybody seemed to be crying, "Down! down!" those who were up calling as loudly as those who were already down. Some pulled down those who were standing before them, to be in turn pulled down by those behind. Then on the stage a radiant figure appeared, serene, but with bosom visibly heaving; and a voice of uttermost simple purity glided forth like

an angel of light on the stormy waters, stilling them into instant calm.

XI

I had not been long in Boston when Theodore Parker's growing fame — or infamy, as some good haters of his heresies preferred to call it — attracted me on Sunday mornings to the Melodeon, where the small independent society over which he had been lately installed held its meetings.

The Melodeon — entered from Washington Street just below the site of the present Boston Theatre — was a popular concert and exhibition hall, where the very beatings of the pulse of New England reforms could be felt and measured. There, notably, the old time anti-slavery conventions hammered away at that amazing futility, abolitionism, abhorred and derided, but nevertheless destined to prove the coulter of the terrible war-driven emancipation plough. There one could listen to the uncompromising Garrison, whose aim was solely to convince, and not to charm; to the eloquent Phillips, who charmed even when he did not convince; to the brothers Burleigh, one of whom favored a fancied resemblance to the pictures of Christ, by parting his hair in the middle and letting it fall on his shoulders in wavy folds; to Frederick Douglass, a natural orator, whose



THEODORE PARKER

own rise from slavery was the most powerful of all arguments for the cause he advocated; to Pillsbury, Foster, and others noted or notorious in their day, women as well as men, their names now remembered only in connection with that agitation. Parker was one of the leaders in it; his exceptional ability and position as a preacher gave him more than a local reputation, and carried the odium of his name as far as those of Phillips and Garrison were known and hated. How he was regarded in South Carolina was illustrated by an experience a Boston merchant once had at Charleston. An excited crowd gathering around the hotel register where he had written his name observed him with suspicious whisperings and threatening looks, which became alarming; when the excited landlord stepped up to him and said anxiously: "Your name is Parker?" "That is my name, sir." "Theodore Parker, of Boston? the abolitionist?" "Oh no, no, sir! I am Theodore *D.* Parker, a very different man!" The landlord breathed a sigh of relief. "I am mighty glad to hear it!" he said. "And allow me to give you a bit of wholesome advice. When you are registering your name in Southern hotels, write the 'D' damned plain!"

Parker occasionally spoke at antislavery meetings, but he was at his best when he had the

Melodeon platform to himself, with his own peculiar audience before him. There every Sunday morning his sturdy figure could be seen standing behind his secular-looking desk; no orator, rarely using a gesture, entirely free from the conventional pulpit tone and mannerism; reading his hour-long discourse (lecture rather than sermon) with a grinding earnestness well suiting his direct appeals to the reason and conscience of his auditors. The reading might at times have seemed monotonous but for the refreshing modernness of his topics, and the illustrative wit and fact and logic that illuminated them.

I was at first repelled by the occasional mercilessness of his judgments and the force of his invective; for he could out-Garrison Garrison in his denunciations of slaveholding and its political and clerical supporters; and even while he voiced my own early convictions regarding the theological dogmas in the gloom of which I had been reared, I was often made to wince by the harshness of metaphor he applied to them.

I seem to have got well over this sensitiveness by the time his congregation, having outgrown the limits of the Melodeon, removed to the then new Music Hall, in the autumn of 1852; for upon that event I addressed to him a sonnet that opened with these lines: —

Parker! who wields a mighty moral sledge
With his strong arm of intellect; who shakes
The dungeon-walls of error; grinds and breaks
Its chains on reason's adamantine ledge;

and ended with —

That champion of the right, whose fearless deeds
Proclaim him faithful to the sacred trust;
Truth, crushed, entombed, but newly risen, needs
To cleanse her temples of sepulchral dust,
Yea, to hurl down that thing of rot and rust,
That skeleton in mail, Religion cased in creeds!

I saw no harshness of metaphor in this, nor indeed any fault except that the last line was an alexandrine. But the editor of Boston's favorite evening paper (of whom I shall have more to say later), to whom I offered it, handed it back to me with the remark: "I suppose you are aware that these sentiments are contrary to those entertained by nine out of ten of our readers?" — instancing Parker's offensive radicalism in politics and religion. I said I was pleased to know that that was his reason for not printing the lines. "It is a very good editorial reason," he replied; and we parted amicably.

In response to my mother's frequently expressed wish that I should "write more poetry" and go oftener to meeting, I informed her in a letter about this time that I occasionally wrote verses, and that I went frequently to hear Rev.

Theodore Parker, — writing the "Rev." (as the Charleston landlord would have said) quite plain. I did not send her the sonnet; and I left her to learn from a good uncle of mine that "if Theodore Parker was n't doing as much harm in the world as the devil, it was because he was n't so smart as the devil; but that he was doing as much harm as he knew how." She believed in her boy, however, and I had little trouble in convincing her that with all his faults Parker was a great and brave and conscientious man.

I did not get my sonnet printed, but I meant that it should have at least one interested reader, and accordingly sent a copy of it to Parker himself. It called out from him a kindly appreciative letter, and brought me the honor of his acquaintance. This ought to have proved a very great advantage to me; for he invited me to come and see him, showed me his collection of rare books in the different languages of which he was master, and proffered me the free use of them, either to examine there in his library, or to carry away and read at my leisure. "Come in at any time," he said, "and help yourself; don't be afraid of intruding upon me. I shall be glad to see you, if I am here; and to talk with you, unless I happen to have a pressing task in hand." He encouraged me to talk about my early life and my reasons for

leaving home; and used me as an illustration of a point in his next Sunday's discourse, quoting my very words, when he alluded to the country-bred youth who comes to the city "because he aspires to something better than working on a farm at twelve dollars a month;" to me a curious exemplification of his habit of making every rill of experience tributary to that omnivorous stream, his weekly sermon.

His generous offer of his library appears to me now as surprising as my failure to make use of it was unaccountable. In thanking him for the enviable privilege, I felt sure that I should return in a day or two and enjoy it. Then the thought of finding him at his desk, writing his next Sunday's homily, decided me to wait until Monday; then for some reason I postponed the visit another week; then — then — in short, I did not go at all! He never repeated the invitation, and I let so long a time elapse that I was at length ashamed to remind him of it. Thus the perverse imp of diffidence and irresolution held me back from many advantages in life, which I had but to face with simple faith and courage, lay hold of, and possess. I recall with shame another instance of my unfortunate faint-heartedness in those days. When I most needed such a friend and adviser, I had the good fortune to meet Mrs. Stowe, then in the

dazzling dawn of her success and fame. She treated me with exceeding kindness, complimented something I had written, and invited me to visit her in Andover, adding, "I want you to make our house one of your homes." I remember well the words and the winning smile with which they were spoken. Of course I promised to go, and of course I never went. Long afterwards I reminded her of that gracious invitation, and of my seemingly ungracious treatment of it. "Foolish boy!" she said; "why did n't you come?" Foolish boy indeed!

The discourses of Parker were a moral and intellectual stimulus, and well I recall the tremendous temporary effect of some of them, — like his sermon on Daniel Webster; — but they never entered very deeply into my life. Extreme radical as he was in his religious and reformatory opinions, the great body of modern thought has come so nearly abreast with him, even passing in some directions beyond him, that he appears a moderate conservative to those who read his writings to-day. Perhaps his influence over me would have been stronger if it had not been early eclipsed by that of his great contemporary, Emerson.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

CHAPTER V

FRIENDS AND FIRST BOOKS

I

I BOARDED at No. 33 Brattle Street a little over a year, then moved to more attractive and commodious quarters at the corner (southeast) of Beach Street and Harrison Avenue. There I had a well-furnished front chamber, where, on Sunday afternoons, I welcomed a few friends, who soon began bringing *their* friends, so that before long I had about me a set of lively companions, all older than myself, and two or three near twice my age. There were two retired army officers who had served in the Mexican war, three or four writers for the press, a sailor who had had as many adventures as Sindbad, and others of varied experiences. I greatly enjoyed their good fellowship; and it was solely for the sake of hospitality that I began to keep cigars and a decanter on my table. Before long I found myself mixing a glass when I sat down to write, and sipping it between paragraphs. I think it was some indiscretion on the part of my guests, one or two of whom could n't withstand temptation, that awakened in me a consciousness

that I was forming an evil habit and encouraging it in others. That consciousness had only slumbered all along; and when it was finally roused, resolution to change my way of life was roused with it. Accordingly, after I had been about a year in my Beach Street quarters, I engaged rooms in a small and very quiet place leading off Tremont Street, not far above the Common. I took care not to be found at home for three or four Sunday afternoons after my removal, and thus managed to sift out, from those whose friendship I wished to retain, my less desirable associates.

From that time forth I never took any sort of stimulant to facilitate composition. Stimulants used for that purpose are like stones let fall into a fountain to create an overflow. The immediate effect may be to raise the water, but at the best they merely forestall the supply, and, even if they do not render it turbid, they often choke it at the source while appearing temporarily to increase it.

Tobacco, in the form of cigarettes and cigars, I had used with moderation ever since I came to Boston; but as I was now becoming intimate in a small circle where even the taint of it in clothing was unwelcome, I soon gave up smoking altogether. I have always rejoiced at a resolution that rid me so early of a habit which might otherwise have become inveterate.

I roomed with a private family and got my meals at boarding-places near by; for one while at a home of vegetarian reformers, where I lived for an entire year without tasting animal food or missing it; and later at a French table d'hôte, where I went back to French conversation and French cookery. In that retired apartment (No. 1 Seaver Place, to be exact), with the exception of summers spent at the mountains or elsewhere, or in travel, and ten months in Europe, I passed the next eight years of my life.

II

In the summer of 1851 I indulged myself in a delightful trip, around by Lake Champlain, the St. Lawrence, and Lake Ontario, to Western New York; spending a week or two at Niagara Falls and Lockport, and for the first time in over four years revisiting my mother and brothers in the old homestead. There was much joy and some heartache in seeing again the well-known Ogden faces, in living over in memory the sports and hopes and irksome tasks of my boyhood, and in breaking open the golden-globed peaches, as I lay on the same old orchard turf, in the warm September weather.

Returning to Boston and my new quarters in Seaver Place, early in the autumn, I resumed my

sketch-writing, and gave what time I could spare from it to something which I hoped would prove a work of more lasting importance.

It had long been my ambition to publish a book, and I now set about writing a novel, to which I gave my spare hours all the rest of that autumn and the following winter.

The story chiefly concerned two Boston families, one recently risen to wealth and social pretension, the other aristocratic and decayed, whose relations with each other gave scope for some good dialogue and delineation of character. The early chapters were, as I remember, lively enough; but I had started out impulsively, without any well-defined plan, and, what was worse, without any interior knowledge of the kind of life I was attempting to describe. I found it impossible to work my situations up to a climax; I lost my interest in the task, and held myself to it by mere force of will, bringing it to a premature conclusion, while it was never, in fact, properly finished. I still had hope that entertainment enough would be found in the story to redeem it from utter failure: but, after it had been successively declined by two or three publishers, I began to take their view of it, which confirmed my own private judgment, and smiled in a sickly sort of way when one of my friends, who had borrowed it to read, declared, on returning

it, that the opening chapters were as good as those of Vanity Fair. When I asked about the concluding chapters, he said he "did n't get so far as those." I fear nobody ever did. He was sure he could find a publisher for it, if I would let him; but I had by that time made up my mind that it should never again be offered for publication, unless I could first find courage to rewrite the latter half. That courage never came.

III

One of the Boston weeklies I wrote for in the early fifties was The Carpet Bag, to which I was attracted less by any pecuniary advantage it offered than by my very great liking for the man who gave it whatever character and reputation it enjoyed. This was Benjamin Penhallow Shillaber, who had begun life as a compositor, and while setting type in the office of The Boston Post had commenced printing in that paper his quaint sayings of "Mrs. Partington," so widely popular in their day, and now so nearly forgotten. He had a large, genial nature, something like Walt Whitman's, but without Whitman's courage and immense personal force, and with nothing of his genius; although Shillaber, too, was a poet in his way, writing with great facility a racy, semi-humorous verse, specimens of which he collected in a volume, Rhymes

with Reason and Without, in 1853. He also published The Life and Sayings of Mrs. Partington, with the proceeds of which he purchased a home in Chelsea, unfortunately in a quarter where real estate was destined to decline in value. Our acquaintance began in 1850, and ripened quickly into a friendship that continued as long as he lived, notwithstanding a divergence in our political opinions, — a divergence that became very wide indeed when men of the North had to choose between a Union dominated by slavery and resistance to that domination. Even at the time of Lincoln's second election there was a modicum of truth in what I said to him jocularly, that I believed he would vote for Jeff Davis if Jeff Davis had the regular Democratic nomination, indorsed by The Boston Post.

Shillaber's physical proportions, his wit and humor and amiable social qualities, made him for many years a notable figure in Boston. I believe it can be said of him more truly than of any other man I ever knew — except perhaps one I shall have much to say of farther on — that he never made an enemy. During all the latter part of his life he suffered greatly from inherited disease, the gout; but neither persistent pain nor enforced retirement and inactivity could ever cloud that cheerful, optimistic nature.

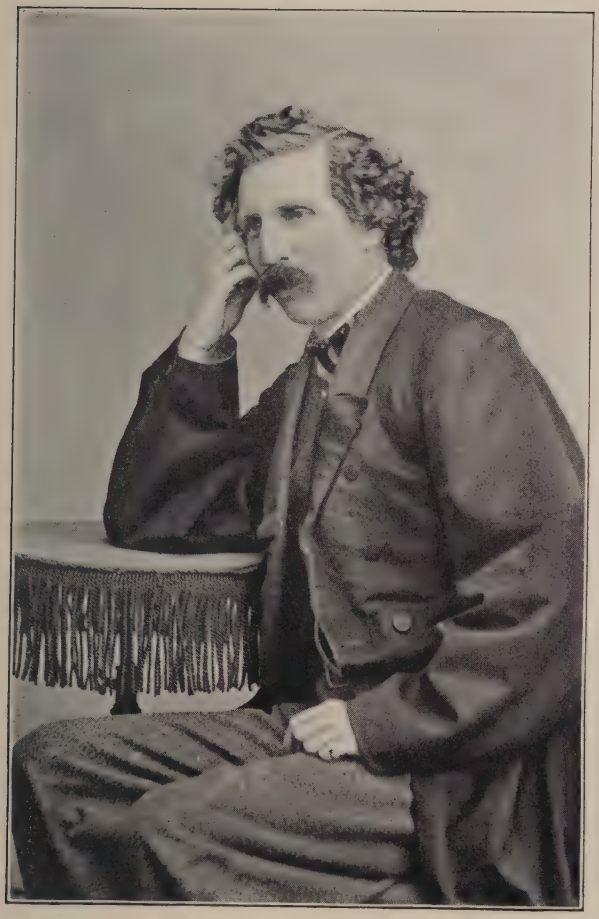
IV

Working at the printer's case in The Carpet Bag office, where I first saw him, was a sandy-haired, thin-featured youth, with a long nose and pale complexion, known as Charley Browne. He had been brought to Boston, from Maine, in 1851, by his uncle, Dr. Calvin Farrar, who was getting a pamphlet printed, to advertise a water-cure establishment he had at Waterford, and who offered the job to the printers of The Carpet Bag, provided they would take the boy with it. They took the job and the boy (then aged seventeen), who before he was much older began to write mildly funny things for the paper over the signature, "Lieutenant Chubb." He probably chose the pseudonym Chubb for the reason that he himself was lank; just as he may have claimed to have learned his trade in the office of The Skowhegan Clarion, because of the oddity of the name, whereas he had really come from another town in Maine, and from the office of a paper less grotesquely labeled. His serious countenance veiled a spirit of original and audacious waggery; and he was even then known to be capable of the same conscientious painstaking in the accomplishment of a solemn act of drollery as when, a few years after, while on a lecturing tour in midwinter, occupying with a friend a room

of arctic temperature, he got out of bed in the middle of the night to hang before a wind-shaken sash a "skeleton" hoopskirt he had found in a closet, remarking shiveringly, "It will keep out the c-o-oarsest of the c-o-old!" From Boston he went to Cleveland, where Charley Brown of The Carpet Bag became Charles F. Browne of the Plaindealer, and Lieutenant Chubb developed into Artemus Ward.

V

It was in The Carpet Bag office that I first met that brilliant young Irishman, Charles Graham Halpine, who had graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, at seventeen, become a journalist and an adventurer soon after, and was Barnum's private secretary when that enterprising showman brought Jenny Lind to Boston in the autumn of 1850. He had come to The Carpet Bag office to see about some Jenny Lind advertising, when he announced his intention of quitting Barnum ("B-b-barnum," he called him, for he had an engaging hitch in his speech) and of settling down in Boston, — as he did, upon the showman's departure. He took an office in Tremont Row and immediately began earning a good income by writing advertisements in prose and rhyme, and poems and paragraphs for the press. He was



CHARLES F. BROWN (ARTEMUS WARD)

a little above the medium stature, with a florid complexion, superabundant animal spirits, and a maturity of mind and manner astonishingly beyond his years, then barely twenty-one.

He quickly got the run of our politics, became a Democrat (as I believe Irish-Americans mostly do, there being in the name something alluring to haters of monarchy), and gained a local reputation as a wit and satirist in the columns of The Boston Post, then in its golden prime under the direction of its founder, Charles Gordon Greene. Like Charles Lamb, Halpine sometimes made his stammer tributary to his wit, as when, upon Mrs. Stowe's going abroad in 1853, on a supposed mission to collect funds for the anti-slavery cause, he nicknamed her, first among his friends and afterward in print, "Harriet Beseecher Be Stowe."

He conceived an ardent attachment for Shillaber, with whom he associated himself in the management of The Carpet Bag. He and I had our individual literary enthusiasms, which struck out sparks of mutual personal interest at our first interview; with us acquaintance and intimacy might almost be said to have been twin-born. We both had good memories for the things we liked, and vividly I recall the happy evening hours we spent, walking up and down the slopes of the Common, or seated on a bench by the fountain, reciting to

each other passages from our favorite poets. It was he who thus introduced me to Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome, delivering parts or the whole of more than one (I remember especially Horatius) in a measured, solemn chant that lapped me in the elysium of a new sensation. I in turn repeated, among other things, Poe's Sleeper, — the most strikingly beautiful of all the productions of that aberrant genius, — and stanzas from Mrs. Browning's Vision of Poets, which I at that time prodigiously admired, but find almost unreadably diffuse and faulty of form to-day. Over all the intervening years I hear again his sharp exclamation of rapturous astonishment at the lines, —

> "And visionary Coleridge, who
> Did sweep his thoughts, as angels do
> Their wings, with cadence up the blue."

Halpine's Lyrics by the Letter H. was a little volume so bright with promise that the writer seemed surely destined to poetic eminence.[1] Unhappily his restless energy and exuberant fancy were unaccompanied by those other gifts of genius, patient persistence and the capacity for taking

[1] Published in 1854. Among the seventy or more lyrics was one, The Ruby, addressed to me, in "acknowledgment of a ring received from" — and so forth, on some occasion which I have entirely forgotten.

pains. What Byron said of himself was more literally true of Halpine, — he must capture his prey at a pounce or miss it altogether; but he lacked Byron's power of holding on after a fortunate seizure. He rarely returned to a poem after the first inspiration had cooled, and it generally went into the waste-basket if once left unfinished or needing much revision. He had amazing speed in short heats.

An unrestrained and sometimes misguided impetuosity affected his conduct as it marred his art, and it led to a catastrophe that was almost a tragedy. A divergence of our aims in life had been the cause of our gradually drawing asunder, after about two years of pretty close intimacy, but I was still on friendly terms with him when he came to me one day to ask my aid in an affair, the announcement of which filled me with incredulous astonishment. It was nothing less than a duel.

Halpine was a reckless critic, and after he became connected with The Carpet Bag (in 1852) he began to print in that sheet articles of the old-fashioned slashing sort of which Shillaber could hardly have approved. He delighted especially in worrying with his wit a young poet named Handiboe, who came, I believe, from one of the Southern States, — who, at any rate, cherished a Southern sense of so-called honor and a prejudice

against personal abuse. Stung to rage, Handiboe sent him a solemn challenge by the hand of a friend, who had likewise lived in the South and was familiar with the "code."

This challenge Halpine brought to me, with the astounding request that I should serve as his second; he was quite in earnest, declaring his intention to give Handiboe, whom he confessed to having injured, "satisfaction." I consented to act as his friend, if he would authorize me to go to the other party and explain that the offensive article was written more for sport than from any malicious intent, that he regretted the injury, and that, at all events, a duel in New England was impossible. But Halpine would not consider such a course. He said: "We can go to Canada and have it out there. If you will not be my second, somebody else will." Finding it impossible, either by remonstrance or ridicule, to alter his determination, I accepted the responsibility, solely in order to prevent the duel from coming off.

Handiboe's second was a journalist and playwright, a social Bohemian (though we had n't that name for the species in those days), by name Ned Wilkins, known to me only by reputation up to that time. He called upon me with due formality, and I was pleased to find that he took the same view of the matter that I did. He had

once been engaged in an affair of honor in New Orleans, and he explained to me how the seconds, of whom he was one, had made bullets of bread-crumbs coated with tin-foil, loaded the pistols in the presence of their principals and allowed them to fire that harmless ammunition at each other at ten paces until their honor was satisfied. He said: "We will take a trip to Niagara Falls and maybe have an interesting time." I was young and adventurous enough to agree to the trip and the ruse of the bread-crumb bullets.

How our two principals would have demeaned themselves if they had thus been brought face to face, weapons in hand, can only be conjectured; for the affair, even while our plans were pending, was precipitated to a most unlooked-for, calamitous conclusion, the circumstances of which, although I was deeply concerned in it, cannot be related here. Halpine went soon after to New York, where he began at once a new and successful course in journalism and politics.

Upon the breaking out of the Rebellion he became a war Democrat, entered the Sixty-ninth Regiment as lieutenant, and quickly rose to the rank of adjutant-general on the staff of General Hunter. He served with that officer in South Carolina; transferred to the staff of General-in-Chief Halleck, he had charge of that officer's

military correspondence, and afterwards assisted Hancock and Canby in revising the army regulations. Meanwhile he wrote war songs that became popular with soldiers in the field (Sambo's Right to be Kilt being one of the most effective) and also contributed to the press the humorous Private Miles O'Reilly papers, which, together with the songs, were afterward collected in book form. Retiring from the army with the brevet rank of brigadier-general, he returned to New York, became a conspicuous figure in metropolitan politics, edited The Citizen, and held the lucrative office of register. His death was fortuitous and untimely. Suffering from an attack of neuralgia, he administered to himself — with characteristic rashness, I have sometimes thought — an overdose of chloroform, and thus terminated his own life in his thirty-ninth year. He had great talent, vigor of mind and body, and engaging social gifts ; and I have always felt that only the more commonplace qualities of patience and prudence were needed for the fulfillment of his early promise.

VI

In the autumn of 1853 there came to Boston a Connecticut girl of eighteen, with a portfolio of sketches in prose and verse by "Ellen Louise," which she was offering to editors in advance of their

GEN. C. G. HALPINE AND B. P. SHILLABER

appearance in a book. The poems were the dewy buds of a talent that was afterwards to find its fullest flowering in sonnets remarkable for their tender feeling and sustained melody; while her conversational and other personal and social gifts were prophecies (could one have read them aright) of the unique sphere of influence she was to fill in Boston and London society during these later decades. Her graceful girlish contributions were, as I remember, readily taken by editors; one of whom, — quite too readily, some of us thought, — while accepting her articles, got himself accepted by the writer, and Ellen Louise Chandler became Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton.

VII

Another apparition of young womanhood, that I remember as beaming transiently upon Boston in those years, was the Maine poetess who wrote under the pseudonym of "Florence Percy," and later under her own name, Elizabeth Akers, after her marriage with one of the most gifted of American sculptors. A well-known poem of hers, Rock me to Sleep, became the subject of a notorious contention, in which I was so much interested, as a friend of the deeply injured author, that I give it a brief mention here. It had been some time published, and had already achieved a

phenomenal popularity, when a New Jersey dentist and amateur rhymester, Dr. Ball, claimed the authorship. Being a person of ample means, he employed an advocate at a liberal fee (one thousand dollars, it was said at the time) to support his pretension in a pamphlet; in which were given letters of reputable witnesses who remembered hearing him, the said Ball, read the poem from manuscript before ever it appeared in print under Florence Percy's name. The public was largely imposed upon by this special pleading, and William Cullen Bryant was misled into attributing the poem to the supposititious author in an edition of Bryant's Library of Poetry and Song. Unfortunately for his case, Ball issued a volume of his own verse, of so contemptible a quality that the purloined Rock me to Sleep, which was included in it, with additional stanzas by Ball himself, shone (as I wrote in a letter of remonstrance to Bryant) like a diamond in a dust heap; whereas (as I went on to argue) any one examining Florence Percy's poems would find among them many of equal and some of decidedly superior merit. Another friend of Mrs. Akers, who carried to Bryant my letter, enforced its representations in an effective personal appeal; and in the next edition of the Library, Rock me to Sleep appeared rightly credited. Mrs. Akers has continued to do

excellent work in verse and prose; while Ball is remembered only in connection with his piratical pretense.

Was he then a freebooter by premeditation, and were his reputable witnesses base perjurers? It has always seemed to me probable that he had written something in a similar vein, that he had read the verses to undiscriminating friends, and that they afterwards confounded them with the poem in question; perhaps aiding him in the self-delusion that his sentiments, if not his very lines, had been plagiarized. But, however innocently he began, he must have known what a bad business he was in before he had proceeded very far. Throughout the whole of it, Mrs. Akers, annoyed as she must have been by the charge of theft brought against her by the real thief, acted with commendable dignity and self-restraint.

The incident is not without parallel in our literary annals. A certain Miss Peck claimed the authorship of William Allen Butler's Nothing to Wear, after that poem had become famous. It was another woman, a Mrs. or Miss Emerson (her very name is passing into kindly oblivion), who laid violent hands on Will Carleton's Betsy and I are Out, constituting it the leading poem of a volume of her own inferior verse. More recently an attempt has been made to deprive Ella

Wheeler Wilcox of one of her popular lyrics. It is sometimes adduced as an argument against the actual authors in such cases that the copyright law is not invoked for their vindication. That law is but a precarious protection for anything that has originally appeared, without its express attestation, in the pages of a periodical; as was the case with each of the poems in question. I once lost a valuable property in one of my duly copyrighted early volumes, the contents of which had been first printed as a serial story in a non-copyrighted newspaper. Nobody else claimed the credit of the authorship, but, because of the neglected technicality, I was for years robbed of the royalties of a continuously selling book.

VIII

Another Boston weekly to which I was a frequent contributor was The Yankee Blade, conducted by a man of culture and experience, William Mathews, — afterwards Professor Mathews, of the University of Chicago, author of Oratory and Orators, and other popular works. He one day said to me, after reading a sketch I had handed him, "You ought to write a book." I replied that I should "like to find a publisher of the same opinion;" which led to his taking me, a few days later, to the publishing house of Phillips,

Sampson & Co., one of the largest and most enterprising in Boston.

I did not then enter the publishers' office for the first time. The stately and urbane head of the firm received us with the same distinguished courtesy with which he had bowed me from his presence, on handing back the manuscript of my unfortunate novel, that I had submitted to him some months before. He did not seem to recall the circumstance, and I was grateful to him for greeting me as if he then saw my blushing face for the first time.

Between him and my friend there had evidently been talk concerning me, and the question of what I might do for the house soon came up.

"Not a novel — not just now; that may come later," Mr. Phillips said, in answer to a suggestion from me; "but a domestic story, something that will make wholesome reading for young people and families. To be a book about this size," — handing me a small volume. "If you like to try your hand at something of the sort, I shall be happy to give it favorable consideration."

Careful as he was not to commit himself further, and disappointed as I was not to receive a commission for a more important work, I accepted the humble task, and hurried to the Common to walk off my excitement and to think over the

plan of a story. Before I went home to my room in Seaver Place, I had not only the motive and main incidents clearly in mind, but also the title of the book, to be named from the chief actor in it, — Father Brighthopes, the old clergyman whose gracious influence was to give character to the narrative. In a few days I sent Mr. Phillips the first fifty pages of the story, and went soon after to learn its fate.

"I have n't had time to look at your manuscript," he said as I took the seat to which he motioned me. That was discouraging, for, being well launched in the narrative, it was important for me to know at once if I was to go on with it. "I carried it home with me, to Worcester, and gave it to my wife." My hopes pricked up a little ; I thought I had rather take a woman's opinion of it than that of the clearest-headed business man. Meanwhile I maintained a smiling serenity of manner, prepared for any fortune.

His eye caught sight of a stocky figure passing the office door. "Ah, there is Mr. Broaders ! Mr. Broaders attends to our printing. Mr. Broaders, how long before you will have some proofs for Mr. Trowbridge ?"

"There will be a batch to-morrow or next day," Mr. Broaders replied. "I can show him a sample page now, if he cares to look at it."

I still endeavored to keep an unruffled demeanor, and answered, as if I had been accustomed to sample pages all my life, "Thank you, I *should* like to look at it."

I was not dreaming; it was indeed a printed page of my story.

"Then Mrs. Phillips did n't find it so very bad?" I said, repressing a shiver of pleasant excitement. "I have more here, if she would like to see it."

"She can read it after it is in type. The printers will want the manuscript as fast as you can furnish it, — won't they, Mr. Broaders? — if we are to issue the volume this spring, which we think will be a good time for it."

This was a bewildering surprise to me, but I merely remarked that I had expected to revise the manuscript carefully before it went to the printers.

"What revision you find necessary can be done in the proofs," said Mr. Phillips, decisively, handing my second batch of copy to Mr. Broaders, with hardly a glance at it.

So it chanced that the story passed into type about as fast as it was written, with all its imperfections; and I had n't the heart to do much to it in the proofs. In about three weeks it was ready for the binders, and it was published in that month of May, 1853.

Its success was immediate, and far exceeded my

expectations, for the little volume seemed to me exceedingly faulty, as soon as it had gone irrevocably out of my hands. The critics were kind to it; people of the most opposed sectarian views united in accepting Father Brighthopes as an embodiment of practical Christianity — that religion of the heart, which is no more a part of any creed than a living spring is a part of the strata through which its waters gush; and I was soon gratified and humbled by hearing how he had affected many lives — more, I feared, than he had affected mine! Readers of the book generally conceived of the author as himself a venerable clergyman; and some who sought his acquaintance on account of it expressed incredulous surprise on finding him hardly more than a boy.[1]

IX

Up to that year my health, although never robust, had been uniformly good, often exuberant. In all weathers I enjoyed my daily walks, gave myself ample recreation, mental and social, and at one time, for about a year and a half, took sparring lessons of Professor Cram, and other vigorous exercise, at his Gymnasium on Washington Street.

[1] This account of how *Father Brighthopes* came to be written is condensed from the Preface to the Revised Edition, issued in 1892, forty-nine years after the original publication.

But I was never a good sleeper, and often when my mind was too actively employed, and I most needed sleep, I got least. That spring I fell into a state which the doctors called "nervous debility," and having a horror of drugs, I spent the month of June at a water-cure establishment in Worcester, where I made a pretty thorough trial of the shower bath, sitz bath, wet-sheet pack, and other interesting processes pertaining to that treatment. Mr. Phillips, my publisher, lived in Worcester, and I had other agreeable acquaintances there.

Edward Everett Hale was then in Worcester, settled over his first parish; before his marriage he had boarded with Mr. Phillips, who knew him intimately, and who took me one Sunday to hear him preach. Dining with Mr. Phillips, after the services, I drew from him this opinion of Mr. Hale, —

"Mr. Hale," he said, "is a very able man. But I doubt if he ever makes his mark in the world, for the reason that he lacks industry."

A singular judgment, it may seem, in the light of what this "very able man" has since accomplished. But the truth is, Mr. Hale was not in the habit of bestowing much study upon his sermons (the one I heard was short, and shall I be quite frank about it and say flimsy?); and Mr. Phillips could not well foresee how far the wonder-

fully versatile activity, the large understanding, and still larger heart of this preacher, philanthropist, man of letters, were to carry him in the next half hundred years. His "industry," if we may call it such, must have been prodigious, though not of the plodding sort, or centred overmuch in his sermons.[1]

[1] In the summer of the World's Fair, at Chicago, riding away from a club dinner, in a coach with Dr. Hale and Eugene Field, I ventured to repeat this dictum, uttered by Mr. Phillips forty years before. Dr. Hale looked grave for a moment, as his mind glanced back to those old Worcester days, then dryly remarked, "Mr. Phillips was a good friend of mine, and — *in most matters* — a very sagacious man."

Upon an occasion commemorating Dr. Hale's eightieth birthday, April 3, 1902, I contributed the following reminiscence: —

In writing a word for Dr. Hale's eightieth birthday, the first thing that occurs to me is the grudge I owe him for the constant rebuke his continued marvelous activity puts upon idle young fellows like me. I remember the first time I ever saw him, although I am sure he will not in the least recall the first time he saw me. It was in Worcester (where he was then settled over his first parish), forty-nine years ago this coming month of roses. I am certain of the year (1853), and I know it was rose-time, for as I was leaving his door in company with our "mutual friend," Mr. M. D. Phillips, the publisher, Mr. Hale turned aside from the garden walk to pluck a blooming wonder, which he handed me with the remark, "Mr. Trowbridge, are you learned in roses?" Of course I was n't learned in roses, and of course he was. This was the first humiliation he ever put upon me, but I forgave him, for I carried away the color and the perfume, and was willing to leave the science and the care of cultivation to him. For similar reasons, I pardon the manifold

In Worcester, too, that summer, I first saw and heard another young minister, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, presiding over a "free church" there, and preaching (in a hall, as I remember) sermons marked by the careful preparation, earnestness of thought, and grace of style which have characterized all his subsequent work now for almost fifty years. The friend who took me to hear him told me that Higginson even then contemplated withdrawing from the pulpit in order to devote himself to literature. "Entreat him not to do that!" I said, speaking out of my own experience of an author's early struggles, without considering his maturer years, or how well his academic training and thorough culture fitted him for boldly entering on a career of letters which in my undisciplined youth, and with my poor equipment, I had found so arduous.

I did not derive any appreciable benefit from the douching, soaking, and skin friction to which I was subjected at the Worcester Water Cure. What I really needed was rest, or some treatment (if any treatment at all but Nature's own) that would soothe the nerves and restore nutrition, —

reproaches laid upon my ignorance and inaptitude by his amazing activities and acquirements, for I, too, like the rest of the world, have all the while been sharing the results of his later half-century of work in the rose-garden of humanity.

safeguard the citadel, so to speak, instead of drawing the vital energies away from it by the constant surprises and assaults they had to resist at the harassed outposts. Moreover, the society of people whose invalidism was their chief interest in life and topic of conversation was not cheeringly tonic.

On my way back to Boston I stopped to see my Trowbridge relatives in Framingham. When, at dinner, I had occasion to remark that I could n't, with impunity, eat all things set before me, a wise old grandam of the family poured for me a glass of hard cider, saying, "Drink it, and you 'll have no more of that trouble." I drank, and verified her prophecy. Whether I owed my restored digestion to the cider, or to some other cause, I cannot affirm. I had had a needed mental rest, and now the physical forces that had been so incessantly diverted to the surface by the water treatment turned inward, to the tired system's grateful relief.

X

Not wishing to settle down at once to work, in July I set off on a more extensive journey than any I had hitherto undertaken. I found my mother in Lockport and took her with me to our relatives in Illinois; then, in the course of the

summer, continued my trip by stage-coach and steamboat to the "far northwest," as it was then called, — as far, in effect, as St. Paul and the Falls of St. Anthony.

St. Paul had then twenty-five hundred inhabitants; the village of St. Anthony fifteen hundred; there was no Minneapolis. The Mississippi fell perpendicularly, eighteen feet, over a horseshoe of limestone ledge, into a wildly picturesque gorge, instead of sliding tamely down an inclined wooden "apron," as when I saw it sixteen years later; the "apron" having been constructed to prevent the wearing away of the Falls. At that earlier visit, the bed of the river, below the cataract, was islanded by enormous blocks of the limestone stratum, fourteen feet in thickness, which had been undermined by the back eddies cutting out the softer substratum, and broken off by the weight of their own projecting mass; and the work of destruction was still going on.

It was a journey full of interest and adventure, and of discomforts not a few. The passage down the Illinois River was made memorable by the light-draft stern-wheel steamboat getting aground at low and still falling water; by the terrible August sun beating down on us by day, and swarms of mosquitoes invading the cabin by night, where the sleepers snored in scattering volleys and by

platoons. The return trip across northern Illinois, from Galena to Naperville, almost justified what was charged against some Western stage-coach routes in those days, that passengers who had paid their fares had to go afoot and carry rails. The rails were for prying the coach wheels out of the mud. I did my share of the walking, but conscientiously refrained from the rail carrying, after seeing an enraged settler rush out at us with a gun, to shoot the first man that laid hand to his dooryard fence. Fences were few and rails scarce; and (being within range of his rifle) I inclined strongly to his view of the question.

I returned to the East by the way of New York city, where I learned that my good friend Madame Perrault had been dead a year or two, and that poor little Raphael (no longer little) had a young stepmother, who, I was glad to learn, did not send him out so often as his own mother had done, with the bottle to be replenished.

I got pretty nearly over my nervous debility that summer, and might have recovered quite, but for a passion that possessed me for spreading a new gospel among my relatives, and friends old and new. I had enjoyed, within the past year, what seemed to me a spiritual illumination, and had got so far beyond my early repugnance to the discussion of religious topics, that I burned with

zeal to combat and overthrow the gloomy, irrational, humanly contrived doctrines that had bred in me that repugnance. I would hold forth half the night on this theme, to anybody who would listen; and to my unspeakable satisfaction, there were those who listened, and rejoiced, and believed.

XI

Returning to Boston in October, I set to work at once to take advantage of the wind of success that had filled the sails of my first little book; and by the middle of January (1854) had followed that by two more of a similar character, written one after the other, with the stereotypers at the heel of my pen.

Then my publishers proposed to me what I had in vain proposed to them not so very long before, — a novel. A full-fledged work of fiction, as they called it, to be issued in monthly parts, after the manner with which Dickens and Thackeray had familiarized the public. I was at first dismayed by the suggestion, foreseeing how much to my disadvantage would be the comparison with those great writers which my following their fashion would seem to challenge. I was willing enough to undertake the work of fiction, but I desired to write it more at my leisure than would be possible with the inexorable printer waiting for my monthly

copy. The publishers argued that I could get a good start by beginning at once; their plan being to bring out the first number in the spring. On the last day of January Mr. Sampson (whose pet scheme it was) took me to spend a night with him at his home in West Roxbury; and when we parted at midnight, and I went to bed (but not to sleep), I had assented to the venture. To this day I marvel at my own temerity and at the firm's amazing confidence in me.

February 6 I commenced writing Martin Merrivale, his X Mark; by the middle of March I had three numbers (to make thirty-six large duodecimo pages each) in the hands of the illustrators and stereotypers; and on May 1 the initial number was issued. Each number was to have as a frontispiece a carefully drawn illustration by Hammatt Billings, one of the most skillful designers of those days, but so exasperatingly remiss in keeping his engagements that after a deal of trouble in getting the first two or three blocks from him, I put my manuscript parts into the hands of S. W. Rowse (later the famous crayon artist), who furnished all the subsequent drawings, and with whom I had always the pleasantest personal and business relations.

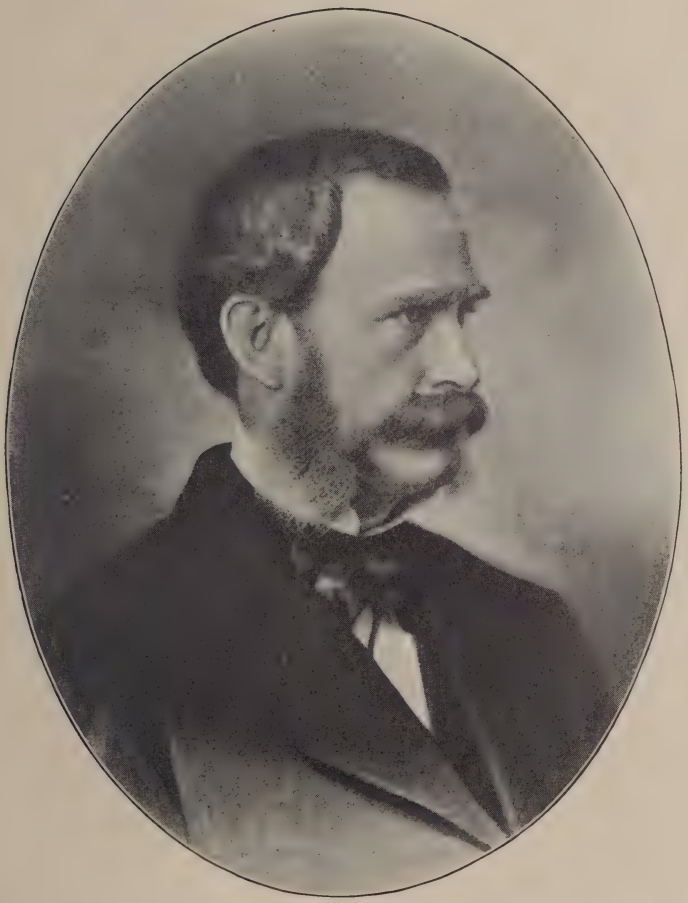
Early in July I took my work to Wallingford, Vt., in a lovely valley of the Green Mountains,

where I finished it late in August. The month of September I passed chiefly among the White Mountains, and returned to Boston about the last of the month, to see the concluding numbers of Martin through the press. There were to have been fifteen of these, but after seven or eight had been published separately, the remainder were issued together, in December, simultaneously with a bound volume containing the completed work.

The subject of the story was a young writer from a rural village going to Boston to find a publisher for his great romance, The Beggar of Bagdad. His adventures among publishers, editors, and "brother authors," beginning at the foot of the hill of difficulty, the top of which he had expected to reach at easy strides, were among the best things in it, if there were any "best;" while the romantic and sentimental parts were the poorest, and very poor indeed, in comparison with the high ideal I had had in mind when I set out to write. The issue in numbers was not a financial success; and it was not until the volume had had time to make its way with the public, as it did but slowly, that I received any substantial returns for my steady half-year's labor.

XII

In the autumn of that year (1854) I assisted an especial agent of the Post Office Department in preparing for the press a volume of his varied and often amusing experiences; and might have been engaged in a more strictly biographical piece of work but for my self-distrust. Dr. Wm. T. G. Morton earnestly desired me to write his life, giving particular attention to the details of his discovery of anæsthesia, which had latterly gained for him a world-wide renown. Without scientific attainments outside of his profession, that of dentistry, but inspired with the faith that there must be some means of alleviating the sufferings he was himself often called upon to inflict, and, consequently, the more terrible agonies attending the surgeon's knife, he had sought aid and information wherever it was to be had; but to him alone was due the credit of rendering painless operations under etherization a practical success. No man who, in the face of difficulty and discouragement, has pursued a sublime but elusive idea to the final hour of triumph, ever experienced a prouder satisfaction than Morton must have felt when, at the first public demonstration of his method, at the Massachusetts General Hospital, October 16, 1846, Dr. Warren turned to the attend-



DR. WILLIAM T. G. MORTON

ing physicians, — up to that moment skeptical, if not contemptuous, and hardly yet convinced that the patient, who had slept tranquilly while a tumor was taken from his throat, was not dead, — and said to them decisively, "Gentlemen, this is no humbug!" It was a magnificent reward for all his trials and sacrifices. But man cannot live by fame alone. Morton, when I knew him, was a poor man. He had given his discovery to humanity, and would doubtless have received an early and ample grant from Congress for that incomparable boon, had not rival claimants rushed in to dispute with him the honor, and ultimately to prevent the award. What he wished me to do was to lay the subject broadly and convincingly before the public, with the object of influencing Congress in his favor. I sincerely doubted my talent for doing a work of that sort or acting the part of an advocate, and after some hesitation declined it. When later I found I was not altogether lacking in such ability, I regretted not having written the biography of the originator of painless surgery.

XIII

In the following winter I had my first experience in writing for the stage. Miss Kimberley, an actress of some note in those days, applied to me, through her manager, George Roberts, a well-

known figure in Boston journalism and kindred enterprises, to translate for her Voltaire's tragedy of Semiramis, with a view to her assumption of the title rôle. As anything like a translation of the measured and monotonous alexandrines, in which are couched the interminable set speeches of Arzace, Otane, Assur, and the rest, would have emptied any American theatre, stampeding the best-intentioned audience in the very first act, I proposed a free adaptation by omissions and compressions, accelerating the movement, introducing two or three humorous minor characters to relieve the oppressive gloom of the drama, and rendering the whole in as terse idiomatic blank verse as I could command. My plan being approved, I set to work some time in February and completed the work in about three weeks. Roberts carried off the manuscript about as fast as it was written, and brought back from his protégée enthusiastic praises of my adaptation. As my object in undertaking it had been chiefly to raise money for a trip abroad in the spring, and as the party I was dealing with had not a very sound financial reputation, I exacted cash payments now and then as the sheets went out of my hands, but got caught on the last act, for which Roberts gave me only his autographic promise to pay, — a promise that was never redeemed.

Miss Kimberley starred with Semiramis two or three seasons, with rather better success, I think, than she ever achieved in anything else. I had stipulated that my name should not be connected with it, not merely because it was hack-work of the most hurried kind, but likewise for the reason that the play was announced as "written expressly" for her, without any reference to Voltaire. The groundwork was Voltaire's, and there was enough of it to found a very good charge of plagiarism on, if I had claimed the paternity of the piece without acknowledging that origin. Often I gave the gist of twenty or thirty deliberate see-sawing lines in a swift phrase of two or three; and where I followed the original most closely I stripped away veils, to come directly at the thought, — as I did quite literally in the opening speech of the Queen, — where she sweeps across the stage, but pauses distractedly to exclaim, —

> "O voiles de la mort, quand viendrez-vous couvrir
> Mes yeux remplis de pleurs et lassés de s'ouvrir?"

This I rendered, —

> O death! O grave!
> When will your welcome, everlasting shades
> Cover these aching orbs?

I wrote in passages that might, I fancy, have

caused the sage of Ferney to lift his skeptical eyebrows a little, as when Semiramis contrasts the things of the spirit with the sterile philosophy with which her minister seeks to console her.

> O Philosophy,
> Thou cheat and plaything of the intellect,
> Thou comest not near the soul! There is a sense
> And wisdom of the spirit deeper far
> Than thy most subtle and down-piercing roots
> Have ever struck. Things that thou deem'st unreal
> Are the essential substance that shall last
> When all this goodly show, this regal pomp,
> These towers and temples that adorn the globe
> And seem eternal, shall have passed away.

I had no further pecuniary interest in the play than the partial payments I was fortunate enough to secure, and Mr. George Roberts's valuable autograph.

In the spring (April, 1855) I went abroad, and spent ten months in Europe, seeing London, Paris, Florence, Rome, Naples, and other points of all-absorbing interest to an enthusiastic youth (of all which I dare not pause to speak), but passing the summer and autumn mainly in Paris, where I completed another novel that marked an epoch in my literary activity.

CHAPTER VI

THE WRITING OF NEIGHBOR JACKWOOD[1]

I

FEW of the present generation of readers will remember the fugitive slave cases that agitated the country about the middle of the last century, one of which, that of Anthony Burns, shook the conservative town of Boston as by a moral earthquake. To this affair especially, and to two or three similar cases, I owed, in a large measure, the powerful impulse that urged me to the writing of an anti-slavery novel. How I was influenced by them; how, almost in spite of myself, and against my own literary taste and judgment, I was led to construct a story with the one tabooed and abominated subject craftily concealed (as was charged at the time) in the very heart of it, a surprise to be exploded like a bombshell in the face of unsuspecting readers, — how I came to commit this atrocity, if it

[1] This chapter comprises a large part of an Introduction to the latest, revised edition of the novel, *Neighbor Jackwood*. By the courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Lee and Shepard, I am enabled to add it to these memoirs, in the order in which it belongs.

was one, I shall endeavor to show in this chapter of reminiscences.

I early imbibed a prejudice against any agitation of the slavery question. In the small community in western New York where I was brought up, I knew, in my boyhood, only two outspoken abolitionists. One of these was our good Presbyterian minister, Mr. Sedgwick, a worthy man with an unfortunate hobby, as it was deemed, and as perhaps it was. His hearers were all good Whigs and Democrats, who paid him for preaching sound doctrinal discourses, and did not care to be reminded, Sunday after Sunday, that, as members of the two great political parties of the day, they were wickedly winking at a wrong committed in States some hundreds of miles off. Whatever the subject of his sermon, he was apt to introduce his *delenda est Carthago* somewhere in the course of it; and he was particularly vehement in his arguments against those who endeavored to prove by the Bible that slavery was right. The other abolitionist was a somewhat eccentric young man, who taught our district school two or three winters, and taught it very well. But as he was known to entertain erratic ideas on various subjects, and had been heard to declare that "even if the Bible said slavery was right, that would n't make it so," his advocacy was not of a kind to help an unpopular cause. In

short, he did n't count; and Mr. Sedgwick stood bravely alone, our sole, persistent, in-season and out-of-season, rabid abolitionist.

I never was a good listener to sermons of any sort, unless they happened to be interesting; and when imprisoned in the bare old meeting-house, I was usually thinking so intently of other things that I would hardly be aware of the unwelcome topic being hammered on the ministerial anvil, until I saw my father begin to fidget in his seat, and the frown to gather on his brow. Often the cloud would remain until dispelled by the genial influence of the late Sunday dinner. Once when I had been left at home, and went to open the dooryard gate for the one-horse family wagon as it drove up, I noticed the ominous scowl on my father's face, and said, loud enough to be heard, —

"I guess Sedgwick has been pounding slavery on his pulpit cushion again to-day."

"Another of his everlasting abolition harangues!" exclaimed my father, as he got down from the wagon at the door. "I wish I had some sort of patent, long-action, quick-pressure gag to spring on him the instant he speaks the word 'slavery.'"

And yet he was a hater of all kinds of oppression, and one of the most scrupulously just men I ever knew.

"Wrong?" he would say. "Of course it's wrong; nothing under heaven can make it right for one human being to own another. But what 's the use of fighting it here at the North? Leave it where it is, and it will die of itself. Any serious attempt to abolish it will bring on civil war and break up the Union."

He often made use of these stereotyped words; but he would add, "I 'm opposed to the spread of it; we've a right to take that stand," — little dreaming that in less than twenty years a determined "stand," taken by the North against the extension of slavery, would bring on attempted disunion and the civil war he dreaded.

II

So the subject of abolition became to me a disagreeable one, and continued so after I went to Boston in 1848, then in my twenty-first year.[1] I

[1] Since this was written a letter has been returned to me, which I wrote from Lockport, N. Y., to a sister in Illinois, in January, 1845, when I was seventeen years old. In it I speak of competing for the prize offered by the *Niagara Courier*, for the best poetical New Year's Address to its patrons, mentioned earlier in these pages. "I called at the office in a few days, and was told by the editor that mine was the best they had received, but that there was almost too much *antislavery* about it, and not enough *Whiggism*." I do not remember a line of the address, and am surprised to find that the abhorred subject cropped out in it.

did not find it popular in that highly conservative city. The followers of Garrison and Phillips were few; society looked upon them as dangerous fanatics, and the very name of *abolitionist* was covered with an opprobrium that clung to it long after the course of political events had justified their moral convictions. The slave power itself was fast doing more than its most relentless enemies could accomplish towards awakening not Boston only, but all the North, to the insatiableness of its greed and the danger of its aggressions. Its reign was a reign of terror. Good people who, like my father, quieted their consciences with the cry, "Let it alone! leave it where it is! don't agitate the subject!" found that it would not be let alone, that it would not rest where it was, that it was itself the great agitator, which would not cease its menaces until it could flaunt its black flag over the whole abject Union.

The enactment, in 1850, of the Fugitive Slave Law, turning all the North into a hunting-ground for escaping human chattels, roused a spirit of resistance in thousands who had hitherto remained indifferent, or timidly submissive, to the encroachments of the monster. It made an "antislavery fanatic" of me. How dangerous I was I did not myself suspect, until Mr. Ben: Perley Poore, then publishing his Sentinel in Boston, went off to

Washington, and left me in charge of the paper, as I have already related. He had been gone a week or two, when something on the subject of Northern abolitionism in one of our Southern exchanges provoked me to reply. I meant my article to be dispassionate and judicial; and when it was written and carefully revised, I could n't see anything in it that should give offense to right-thinking readers. So I printed it. Then the deluge! I hardly knew what I had done, when my good friend Poore came hurrying back from Washington, and walked most unexpectedly into the Sentinel office one morning, where he found me seated at the desk, unconscious as a cherub of any wrong-doing. When I expressed surprise at seeing him so soon, he said he thought it was time for him to come and look after his editor. Always genial and kind, he yet made me feel extremely uncomfortable when he added, —

"Good heavens, Trowbridge! what were you thinking of, to turn the Sentinel into an abolition paper?"

"Is that the way you look at it?" asked the cherub.

"That 's the way subscribers will look at it," he replied.

A good deal nettled, I said, "Then perhaps you would like me to leave the paper?"

BEN. PERLEY POORE

"Leave the paper?" he echoed, with about the bitterest laugh I ever heard from his lips. "Print another such article, and the paper will leave us!"

He went on to give a grimly humorous account of the sensation my poor little screed created in Washington, where he had many friends and subscribers, all of proslavery sentiments, and of his sudden haste to leave that city.

"Of course," he added, "I laid it all to the boy I had left in the office."

"Well," I said, "what was there about the boy's article that they could reasonably object to?"

He was generous enough to reply, "Nothing, in my opinion. Every word of it is true enough. And you may think it strange that a man can't print in his own paper what he thinks on a great public question like slavery; but that is a fact. We shall see."

And we did see. Angry protestations from subscribers were already lying unopened on his desk. More came in, from North and South alike; and one of our South Carolina exchanges did me the honor to answer my article with an insolent threat of secession, — an old threat from that State, even in those days, and not altogether an idle one, as was so long believed.

Mr. Poore was too good a friend to discharge

me for an act of indiscretion already committed. But he was right in his prognostication. The paper soon after left us; that, too, without the help of another antislavery leader. How many subscriptions my imprudence lost it I never knew. It never had too many.

III

I shared the intense interest awakened in Boston by its famous fugitive slave cases of 1850 and 1851, — the romantic escape of Ellen and William Craft, and the more notorious and dramatic episodes of Shadrach and Thomas Simms. Yet I hardly realized what inflammable antislavery stuff was in me, until the capture of Anthony Burns occurred, in May, 1854.

I was living in bachelor lodgings in Seaver Place, engaged in writing Martin Merrivale, when the terrible realities of that event put my poor, fictitious characters to ignominious flight, and kindled in me a desire to write a novel on a wholly different subject.

It was not easy, at that time, to take a runaway slave out of Boston; secrecy and subterfuge had to be used, without much regard to the forms of law. Burns was arrested on a false pretext, and hurried before United States Commissioner Edward G. Loring, before it was known that kidnappers were

again in the city. It had been hoped that the rescue of Shadrach and the tremendous difficulties encountered in the rendition of Simms would sufficiently discourage similar attempts, as indeed they did for a time. Burns had really been seized, not for any petty offense, as was pretended, but as a fugitive from the service of Charles F. Suttle, a Virginia slaveholder. The truth became quickly known, despite the precautions taken to conceal it; and the report, which was made a rallying cry to the friends of the oppressed, "Another man kidnapped!" ran with electric swiftness through the city.

Commissioner Loring was also judge of probate, and a man of eminent respectability. In his private life he was, no doubt, just and humane. I was present, and watched his face with painful interest, when he rendered his decision in the case. In vain had Mr. Richard H. Dana made his eloquent plea for the prisoner, warning the commissioner that what he was about to do would take its place in history, and praying that it might be in accord with a large interpretation of the law, with the higher conscience, and with mercy. The commissioner had evidently determined to perform what he deemed his duty, without any betrayal of emotion. His face was slightly flushed, but firm. My pity was not all for the slave; some of it was

for such a man in such a place. On a bench before him sat Theodore Parker and Wendell Phillips, the great preacher and the brilliant orator, whose certain and terrible denunciations of what he was about to do might well have made him pause. Perhaps, as a commissioner acting under the Fugitive Slave Law, and ignoring the laws of Massachusetts, he could not have rendered a different judgment. But he might have resigned his commission, and washed his hands of the whole black business in that way. Without a tremor of lip or of voice, he coldly reviewed the evidence and the law in the case, and remanded Anthony Burns to slavery. Then Parker and Phillips arose, and walked arm in arm out of the court-room, conversing in low tones, with bowed heads and lowering brows.

Meanwhile Boston was in a turmoil of excitement. Public meetings were held, an immense one in Faneuil Hall on the evening preceding the removal of the fugitive; and that night there was a gallant attack upon the Court House in which he was confined. A stick of timber was used as a battering ram against one of the western doors, which was broken in; there was a mêlée of axes, bludgeons, and firearms, and one of the marshal's guard was killed. But the assailants, led by that ardent young reformer, Thomas Went-

worth Higginson, of whom, later, the world was to hear considerably more, and by a colored man, Lewis Hayden, were unsupported, and were driven back.

Reports of the Faneuil Hall meeting and of the assault on the Court House rallied an immense crowd to Court Square and the adjacent streets the next morning, to witness the final act of the drama. It was a black day for Boston, that 27th of May, 1854; the passions of men were stirred to their depths, and often friends were divided against friends. I remember meeting in the crowd one with whom I had been on intimate terms not long before. He had been an officer in the Mexican war, and was as much of a Roman as to his nose and character as any man I ever knew. But that day the Roman in him was enlisted in a bad cause. Drawing me aside in the crowd, and opening his vest, he grimly called my attention to a revolver thrust into an inside pocket.

"What 's that for, Ned?" I asked, in the old familiar way.

"I am one of the marshal's private deputies," he answered, with brutal frankness. "There are over a hundred of us in the Court House there and in this crowd. At the first sign of an attempt to rescue that damned nigger, we are going in for a bloody fight. I hope there 'll be a row, for it 's

the top-round of my ambition to shoot an abolitionist."

"Well, Ned," I replied, "you may possibly have an opportunity to shoot me; for if I see a chance to help that 'damned nigger' I'm afraid I shall have to take a hand."

Any attempt of the kind at that time was out of the question. The broken door was barricaded; the Court House was a fortress. Besides his hundred deputies, — men recruited for the most part from the brutal and vicious classes of society, frequenters of grog-shops and gaming-saloons, — besides this posse of desperadoes, disposed as his special guard and distributed through the crowd they were to watch and thwart, the marshal had the police force of Boston and a large body of militia, ostensibly to keep the peace, but practically to aid him in his ignoble task. The Court House was encircled by bayonets, and Court Street and State Street were lined on both sides with files of troops, keeping a lane open all the way to Long Wharf for the expected procession.

At last it set forth, led by a vanguard of armed police. "There he is!" went up a half-stifled cry from the multitude; and there indeed he was, that one poor, hunted, black bondman, whom a derisive fate had that day made the most-talked-of and important figure in all New England. What

must he have thought of the great concourse of citizens, the swords and clubs and muskets, that met his bewildered gaze as he walked forth from his prison? — all there for him, the wretched and baffled runaway from Virginia! I remember his scared black face, as he rolled his eyes about for a moment before he was hurried away; not so very black, either, — a complexion rather of bronze than of iron, — with a gleam of excitement in it which was almost a smile. He had heard the blows that thundered against the Court House door the night before; he knew what they meant; he knew how Shadrach had been rescued; but if he still cherished a hope of his own deliverance, it must have abandoned him at that moment. All was over. The free land to which he had escaped through difficulties and dangers was no free land for such as he. Back he must go to bondage and the lash.

There was no pause. The marshal and his special guard inclosed Burns in a compact phalanx, following the vanguard, and another body of armed police brought up the rear. The march was rapid, amid groans and hisses, and now and then a cheer, from the ranks of spectators. From Court Square into Court Street, gazed at from hundreds of windows, some of which were draped in black in token of the city's humiliation; past

the old State House, and over the very ground where the first blood was shed preluding the Revolutionary struggle, some of it the blood of a black man, — scene of the Boston Massacre ; and so on, down State Street, moved the strange procession, between the two rows of bayoneted guns, to Long Wharf, where, by the President's orders, a revenue cutter was in waiting, to receive on board the kidnappers and their prey.

IV

It was a long time before I could sit down again quietly to the fiction on which I was engaged. I felt a burning desire to pour out in some channel the feelings which, long suppressed, had been roused to a high pitch of excitement by this last outrage. Still, something of the old repugnance to the subject of slavery remained ; I shrank from the thought of making a black man my hero ; the enormous popularity of Uncle Tom, instead of inciting me to try my hand at an antislavery novel, served rather to deter me from entering the field which Mrs. Stowe had occupied with such splendid courage and success.

More than once, before the Anthony Burns affair, before Uncle Tom even, the fugitive slave as a subject for a novel had come up in my mind, and I had put it resolutely aside ; but now it pre-

sented itself again, and persistently haunted me. "Why a black man?" I said to myself. "All slaves are not black. And why a man at all?" as I thought of Ellen Craft. "Sympathy will be more easily enlisted for a woman, white, with native refinement and sweetness of character, and yet born a slave, with all the power and prejudice of legal ownership and cruel caste conspiring to defeat her happiness." And I fell to thinking of that worst form of slavery which condemned to a degrading bondage not those of African blood alone, but so many of the descendants of the proud white master race.

Though I was hardly conscious of it, the thing was taking shape in my mind when I went to spend the summer (of 1854) at Wallingford, Vt., in the bosom of the Green Mountains. In the broad and beautiful valley of Otter Creek I found, in an old farm-house, a quiet place to live, and think, and write. I gave four or five hours a day to Martin Merrivale, and had ample leisure, in the long summer afternoons, to bathe in the streams, wander in the woods, climb the mountains, and in the course of my rambles make extensive acquaintance with the country and the people.

One day, while exploring the interval about the confluence of Otter Creek and Mad River, — which became Huntersford Creek and Wild

River in the novel, the scene of the fishing adventure of Mr. Jackwood and Bim, — lost, like them, amid the tortuous windings of the two streams, still further lost in my own imaginings, I suddenly saw rise up before me out of the tall grass the form of an old hag. And it was not an old hag at all, but a beautiful girl in disguise ; nor yet a girl, but really a creature of my own imagination, which appeared as vividly to my mind's eye as if it had been either or both.

" Both it shall be," I said ; " a forlorn maiden in the guise of an old woman, lost here in this wilderness of alders and long grass and labyrinthine streams ! — a mystery to be accounted for." And the phantom-like projection of my fancy took its place at once in the plan of the story, giving it life and form from that hour.

V

I was impatient to get " Martin " off my hands, and to begin the new novel, of which I wrote the first chapters in the old Vermont farmhouse, in the midst of the scenes described. It was then thrown aside, to be taken up later, under very different circumstances. I carried the manuscript to Europe with me in the spring of 1855 ; and having settled down in Passy, just outside the walls of Paris (now a part of Paris itself), I resumed

work upon it, writing a chapter, or a part of a chapter, every morning, and joining my friends in excursions in and about the gay capital in the afternoon.

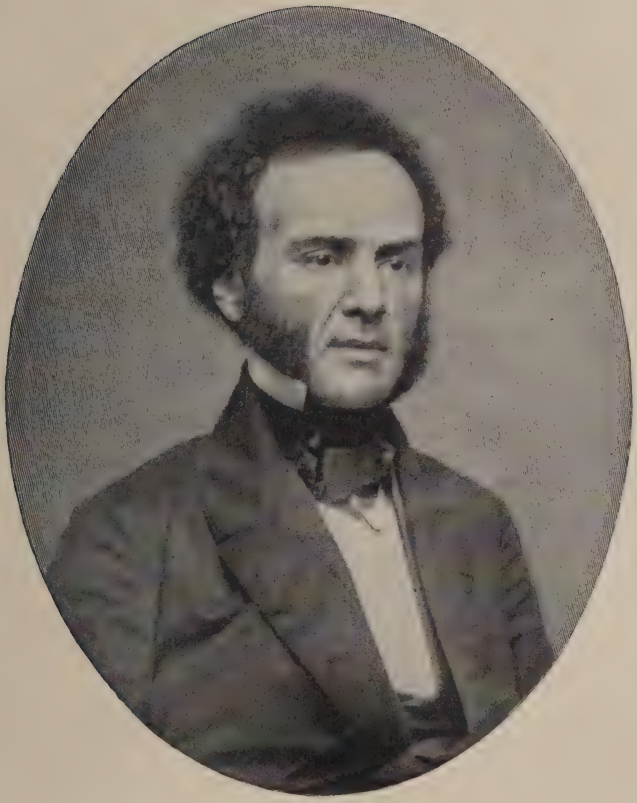
I had one friend there who, by his sympathetic and suggestive criticisms, assisted me greatly in my work. He read the manuscript almost as fast as it was written, and was always eager to talk with me about the incidents and characters, and their development; thus keeping up my interest in them when it might otherwise have flagged amid the diversions of a life so strangely in contrast with the life I was depicting. Often we walked together to the Bois de Boulogne of an evening, sat down on a bench by one of the lakes, and discussed the Jackwood family, Enos Crumlett and Tildy, Hector and Charlotte, and the slave-catchers, until these became more real to us than the phantasmal beings, in carriages or on foot, moving before our eyes in the lighted park. This friend was Lewis Baxter Monroe, afterwards well known as Professor Monroe of the Boston School of Oratory, whom I shall have other occasions to mention, further on in these memoirs.

The story finished, I had great trouble in naming it. I suppose a score of titles were considered, only to be rejected. At last I settled down upon "Jackwood," but felt the need of joining to

that name some characteristic phrase or epithet. Thus I was led to think of this scriptural motto for the title-page: "A certain *woman* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." Which suggested the question, "Who was *neighbor* unto this woman?" and the answer, "*Neighbor Jackwood.*" And I had my title.

I read the proofs of the novel in the spring of 1856, after my return to America; but it was not published until the following winter, for a special reason, which found considerably less favor with the author than with the publishers. Mr. Phillips was afraid the work might be lost sight of in the dust raised by Mrs. Stowe's Dred, which he was to issue about the time my humbler venture was ready. I was repaid for this tax upon my patience when, after the book had been out a few days, and the press notices were beginning to come in, Mr. Phillips greeted me one morning with his peculiarly stately bow and a serene smile, and remarked significantly, "Our friend Jackwood need n't have been afraid of anybody's dust."

It had the advantage of a fresh and unhackneyed theme, and was the first serious attempt to depict those phases of country life amid which the narrative moves, and to render the speech of the people with due regard to its humorous flavor, yet absolutely without exaggeration. Although it



MOSES DRESSER PHILLIPS

was written "with a purpose," that purpose was inclosed, as far as possible, in the larger aim of telling a strong and interesting story. Of course the antislavery element in it was liberally denounced, and the bombshell of surprise, before mentioned, caused a shock to the prejudices of many worthy people. They were horrified by the mere suggestion of a union between the hero and heroine. I had been careful to offset the cloud of heredity resting upon her by one more terrible lowering upon his family and threatening him; but those so quick to take offense at the one gave no heed to the other.

VI

The success of the novel led to its dramatization by the author for the Boston Museum stage, then managed by the veteran actor W. H. Smith, who took the title rôle of Neighbor Jackwood. The part of Enos Crumlett was expanded to the proportions of William Warren, a comic actor of rare powers, for many years a prime favorite with Boston audiences, that never wearied of his broad yet delicate and genial humor. I engaged all the players to read the book while studying their parts, and thus secured unusually good personations of the characters from a mediocre company. We had a bright young girl, Rose Skerritt, to

personate Bim. Mrs. Thompson, who was never a noticeably bright star in anything else, blazed out conspicuously as Grandmother Rigglesty, into which character she threw energies she was not before supposed to possess, — so conscientious in her presentation of it that, as Dr. Holmes remarked, she "took out her teeth."

The first night of the piece was memorable to at least one person in the audience. I went early to the theatre, and ensconced myself, with a friend, in an obscure corner, where I could carefully watch the performance, to see where it dragged, and note whatever changes should be made in the inevitable "cutting" process to take place the next day. All went prosperously, until suddenly there was a hiss, and a storm of howls and hisses immediately followed. A crisis in the plot had been reached which roused the opposition of the proslavery part of the audience, — a very large part, as it seemed for a while. A counter-storm of cheers and clappings set in, and there was a prolonged uproar that threatened to end the performance. Victory at last remained with the friends of the piece, and the performance proceeded.

"You will cut out those objectionable speeches?" my friend whispered in my ear.

"No," I replied; "I will strengthen them."

An amusing incident occurred when we were on our way to the theatre that first night, Monday, March 16, 1857. Being just then personally interested in playbills, I turned aside to see what a man was pasting over one which I had regarded with especial satisfaction, whenever I passed it that day and the preceding Sunday. It was the bill of the *next day's* performance of Jackwood; and on it was announced, in the showy head-lines then in vogue, the astonishing success of the first performance, which we were then on our way to witness!

TREMENDOUS HIT!!

RECEIVED WITH THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE!!!

"All right, only the man anticipates a little," said my friend, as we went on laughing. "But we 'll take it as a good omen."

I may here add that this incident served as a hint for the opening lines of Author's Night, written a few years later: —

> "'BRILLIANT SUCCESS!' the play-bills said,
> Flaming all over the town one day,
> Blazing in capitals blue and red, —
> Printed for posting, by the way,
> *Before the public had seen the play*," etc.

Jackwood had a long and prosperous run on the boards in Boston, and was afterwards brought out in other places, but with less satisfactory re-

sults. In New York it was badly acted, all the naturalness and humor of the parts being degraded to mere farce; as I saw to my sorrow, on an occasion rendered the more harrowing to my feelings as an author by the fact that I had invited my friends of those years, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Henry Stoddard, and another friend who had accompanied me from Boston, to occupy a box with me at the absurd performance.

It is now some years since the play has been represented by any professional company, but it is still used in amateur theatricals; and the novel has never lacked readers.

CHAPTER VII

UNDERWOOD, LOWELL, AND THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

I

I FOLLOWED the play of Neighbor Jackwood on the Museum stage with a spectacular piece, Sindbad the Sailor, which also had a prosperous run of several weeks; and did other work for the Museum proprietor, Mr. Moses Kimball, in the way of adaptation and dramatization. Meanwhile I contributed to two of the popular Philadelphia magazines, also to Putnam's and Harper's; and in the summer of 1857 I made still another Western journey, writing letters for the New York Tribune over the signature of "Jackwood."

In the fall of 1857 The Atlantic Monthly was started, an event I shall now give some account of, together with recollections of the man to whom, more than to any other, its inception was due.

II

I remember well the occasion of my first meeting with Francis Henry Underwood, much better

indeed than I recall the month, or even the year, although I think it must have been late in the autumn of 1853. It was on a Monday morning, and he had been but an hour or two at the desk newly placed for him in the counting-room of Phillips, Sampson & Co. As I entered on some errand, the strange face looked up with a surprised, interested, penetrating expression, which kindled into cordial recognition as the urbane head of the firm approached and introduced us.

He was then in the flower of early manhood, not quite twenty-nine years old, with a fine ruddy complexion, frank yet dignified manners, and an admirable aplomb which made him a noticeable man in any company. He had had his share of the varied experiences commonly attending the career of a typical self-made American. He had been school teacher, law student, and clerk of the Massachusetts State Senate in the stirring "coalition" days of 1852, when stalwart Henry Wilson was president of that body, and Banks and Hoar and other notable members of the House were in training for the wider arena of national politics. But his aspirations were always more literary than political, and after a year's service in the Senate he had found a more congenial position in the great publishing house, where his chief duties were to examine manuscripts offered for publica-

tion, and conduct correspondence with authors. I found him extremely companionable, warming quickly to a new acquaintance; and I envied in him the entire absence of that shyness which in me too often repressed the ardor of social impulses. He had many friends among all sorts of people, but principally among artists and writers. There was one, particularly, of whose intimacy he was justly proud, the brilliant wit and poet of Cambridge, — "my friend Mr. Lowell," as he commonly spoke of him with undisguised satisfaction.

I saw him almost daily at his office, but our real intimacy began when first he invited me to his house. "Come and dine with me on Sunday," he said, "and in the afternoon we will walk over to Elmwood." It was a red-letter day for me, when I went out from Boston at the appointed time, found him in his modest home (he was living in Cambridge), and after dinner walked with him to the home of the Lowells.

III

I had never yet seen the author of the Biglow Papers and A Fable for Critics; and the anticipation of meeting him sensitized my mind for sharp and enduring impressions. I retain a distinct picture of Elmwood as it looked that afternoon: a spacious, square, old-fashioned mansion,

standing in the midst of snow-covered grounds, and surrounded by tall trees and clumps of ragged lilacs, all bare of foliage except the pines lifting their golden-green tops in the wintry sunshine. My guide entered like a familiar guest, and led the way up three flights of stairs to a large front room, which was the poet's study. Mere words often convey to the mind impressions of form and color; and I had conceived of Lowell — not from anything he had written, but solely from the sound of the two syllables of his name — as a tall, dark, dignified person, with a thin face, ample forehead, and prominent nose. Very great, therefore, was my surprise when I was ushered into the presence of a compact little man in short velvet jacket, with wavy auburn hair parted in the middle over a full, fair forehead that appeared neither broad nor high, and a bright, genial face more expressive of the vigorous and humorous Hosea than of the exalted Sir Launfal.

The easy cordiality of his greeting put me at once at my ease, and prepared me for the enjoyment of a delightful occasion. He was accustomed to receive, at that hour on Sunday afternoons, a small circle of friends, among whom he was the shining central figure. Soon after our arrival Robert Carter came in, a short, sturdy man, with a big forehead spanned by a pair of gold-

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bowed spectacles, a walking cyclopædia of information. Dr. Estes Howe, Lowell's brother-in-law, and two or three others made up the company, and a quiet, desultory conversation ensued; not at all that of gods discoursing "from peak to peak all about Olympus," but very much like the talk of men of sense and culture anywhere. Some good stories were told, there was now and then a meteoric pun, or a wise observation illumined a subject like the sudden flash of a search-light; but what interested me most was the reading by Lowell of some verses which I do not remember ever to have seen in print. The talk turning upon French poetry, he took from a shelf of ponderous volumes a work of Voltaire's, from which he first read us a part of Hamlet's soliloquy in the great Frenchman's attenuated and flexible alexandrines; a version as much like the original as some luxuriant vine is like a rugged trunk it climbs and hides. This paraphrase Lowell had retranslated into English quite faithfully, giving it, however, some sly turns to bring out with ludicrous effect its graceful feebleness in contrast with the sententious Shakespearean lines.

It was late in the afternoon when the company separated, and I went home to tea with Underwood; then in the evening I walked back to Boston, stopping long on the bridge — one of Lowell's

"caterpillar bridges crawling with innumerable legs across the Charles" — to watch the stars mistily wavering in the dark, full river, and to think over the events of the afternoon.

Besides these Sunday afternoons at Lowell's there were Friday evening gatherings, — "ostensibly for whist, at the house of each of the party in turn," as Underwood tells us in the The Poet and the Man. The whist club included Lowell, Carter, John Bartlett, John Holmes, and other friends and neighbors of Underwood. Then there were very informal dinners in Boston, nearly always attended by him and Lowell, and often by Edmund Quincy, Francis Parkman, and Dr. Holmes. Such were some of his associates, and all who knew him will attest how generous he was in sharing old friendships with new friends. If never any false pride deterred him from making his friends useful to him, he had the right of one who was equally ready to serve them or to make them useful to one another. One especial favor which he would have done me I recall with mingled gratitude and regret. Hearing that I was intending to go abroad in the spring of 1855, he interested himself in my plans, and one morning met me with a significantly uplifted finger, and the startling announcement, "It is all arranged; you are going with Mr. Lowell!"

Startling indeed, for although I knew that Mr. Lowell, lately appointed professor of modern languages in Harvard University, to succeed Mr. Longfellow, was to have a year of study in Europe before assuming the duties of that position, I had not conceived the possibility of having him for a fellow passenger.

"I have talked it over with him. He is going in a sailing-vessel, and you two will probably be the only passengers. Don't say a word against it!" Underwood went on, as I murmured something about different arrangements. "Take my advice, — cancel them; give up everything else for this rare chance."

Alas, those different arrangements! My friend Monroe (mentioned in the preceding chapter) was going abroad with three Spanish-American youths to superintend their education in Paris, and I had engaged to accompany them. Neither he nor they could speak French, and my familiarity with that language was depended upon to aid in establishing them in the great foreign metropolis. Time was important to them, and they were to make the voyage in a steamer. I should myself have preferred the more leisurely and less expensive passage; and I knew how delightful as well as profitable to me, with my imperfect education and unsettled literary aims, would be

a month's daily intercourse with a finished man like Lowell, in the vast and unbroken seclusion of the ocean. But I could not well change my plans. Underwood called me an idiot, as perhaps I was. But he did not weary of serving me; and I cannot forbear the pleasure of recording another instance of his active friendship. When I came home, a year later, with the manuscript of Neighbor Jackwood in my trunk, he took a lively interest in putting it through the press; and it was afterwards through his mediation that I was engaged to make a dramatic version of it for the Boston Museum stage.

IV

Boston had as yet no magazine that could command the united support of the best writers and of an appreciative public. The Dial, started in 1840, with such contributors as Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Margaret Fuller, was designed as a vent to the new wine of Transcendentalism, and commended itself chiefly to the few who had felt the fine intoxication of that ferment. It was near its last days when, in 1843, Lowell and his friend Robert Carter started The Pioneer, with Poe and Hawthorne in its list of contributors; which also failed for the lack of something behind it more substantial than enthusiasm and genius.

Up to the time I write of there had been no other noteworthy venture of the sort. There was, indeed, the scholarly and exclusive North American Review, an able quarterly, which had not yet metamorphosed itself to a monthly and emigrated. Philadelphia had its three graces, Graham's, Godey's, and Sartain's, and New York its old Knickerbocker, new Harper's, and Putnam's; why then should not Boston be represented by a monthly of her own, worthy of her literary reputation, and of the authors who stood ready to contribute to its pages? This was a question one often heard discussed; the idea was in the air, as they say, like so many ideas that wait for the right hour and the right man for their materialization.

The man in this case was Underwood, whose position made him a connecting link between a circle of brilliant writers and a publishing firm of enterprise and reputation. He had made an earlier unsuccessful attempt to establish it, with J. P. Jewett & Co. as publishers; and he now talked it over again with his literary friends, on the one hand, particularly with Professor Lowell; and with Phillips, Sampson & Co., on the other, particularly with the "Co." Mr. Sampson was then in feeble health, and practically out of the business. Mr. Phillips, affable but dignified, had a glacial atmosphere when urged to consider pro-

positions which his judgment failed to approve, and Underwood found his cold side when he talked to him of the magazine. The "Co." in those days was Mr. William Lee, then a young man, later of the firm of Lee & Shepard. He and Underwood were on intimate terms; and when Underwood came in, electrically charged, from conferences with his Cambridge friends, he found Lee a good conductor. The two partners were in the habit of going out to lunch together; and in that hour of relaxation the junior would sometimes bring up the subject of the proposed magazine, arguing that they ought not to miss so magnificent an opportunity. The coöperation of Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Hawthorne, Holmes, — a dazzling array of names, — was assured; and no doubt that of the then most popular writer in the world, a woman, could be obtained. Warming by degrees, the senior at last said he would consult Mrs. Stowe.

V

Four or five years before, the manuscript of Uncle Tom's Cabin, or rather the scrapbook containing the newspaper chapters clipped from the National Era, had been offered to Messrs. Phillips, Sampson & Co. for publication in book form. The firm had at that time a large Southern trade,

which they feared would be imperiled by the appearance of their imprint on the title-page of that flaming antislavery tract in the guise of fiction. Nobody could have foreseen that Uncle Tom was to create for itself a book trade of more value in a single year than the ordinary trade of any house for a decade; so that we need not marvel at the seeming short-sightedness of Mr. Phillips when, after a brief consultation with his partners, he declined the proffered book with his customary courtesy and "with thanks." It went to an obscure Boston bookseller, who had little to risk by the undertaking, and, as it proved, fortune and immense publicity to gain. Its success not only revolutionized public sentiment on the subject of slavery; it also converted booksellers from their conservative views of the relative value of a Southern trade. Mrs. Stowe could well afford to forgive the slight put upon a performance that had vindicated itself so triumphantly; and receiving an intimation that Mr. Phillips would not decline a second work of hers, she had, in 1854, given the firm her Sunny Memories, following it in 1856 with the antislavery novel, Dred.

The publisher and the authoress were on exceedingly friendly terms, and Mrs. Stowe rarely came to town without calling upon Mr. Phillips. It was noticeable that while she gave to some of the

humble frequenters of the Winter Street store one or two careless fingers, the whole of the little hand that had written the most famous book of modern times went out very graciously to him. When he mentioned to her the project of the new magazine, she received it with instant and cordial approval, and promised it her earnest support. The publisher hesitated no longer; a chain of agencies had accomplished what might never have come to pass had either one of them been absent. I remember Underwood's radiant countenance when one morning he announced to me in strictest confidence that the proposed publication was finally decided upon; that Lowell was to be editor in chief, and that he was to be Lowell's assistant. I dare say my own face grew radiant, too, when he went on to say that a contribution from me would be expected for the first number.

VI

The new venture was not yet named, and while all of us who were in the secret were ransacking our wits for a good title, Dr. Holmes, who seemed ever ready with the right thing at the right moment, christened it The Atlantic Monthly.

Early in June, 1857, Underwood went abroad in the interest of the forthcoming magazine, taking letters to the foremost British from the best-known

American writers. Emerson alone, in a characteristic note, declined to furnish the desired introductions. "Since my foreign correspondents have ceased sending their friends to me, it seems hardly fair," he wrote, "that I should accredit any of mine to them." It was Underwood's first trip to Europe, and the mission was very greatly to his mind.

It was the intention to issue the initial number a month or two before it actually appeared, and it was to open with the first chapters of a serial story by Mrs. Stowe. This she was unable to furnish, hindered, I think, by some domestic calamity. Then came the financial panic of that year, and it was feared the publication might have to go over to the next year, or be postponed indefinitely, — a peculiarly dismal prospect to writers whose contributions had been accepted. Few people were aware how narrowly the great publishing house escaped collapse in that tempestuous time. It was October when the delayed first number appeared, bearing date November, 1857.

In this age of magazines, great and small, when nobody is surprised to hear of new ones starting up every few months, it is difficult to conceive of the wide interest excited by the advent of the long-expected Atlantic. The articles were unsigned, which Mr. Phillips himself thought a mistaken

policy, with so resplendent a group of names that might have served to emblazon the announcements. The publishers' self-denial found compensation, however, in the interest of the riddles of authorship which the public was each month invited to solve. That of some of the principal articles was generally an open secret, while the guesses as to others were often amusing enough; as when a poem by a little known writer was copied and went the rounds of the press attributed to Longfellow or Emerson, — an incident not calculated to please either him who was thus deprived of his due credit (as I can attest from my own experience), or the other who had a doubtful honor thrust upon him.

In place of the hoped-for chapters of a serial, Mrs. Stowe had in the first number only a short story, The Mourning Veil, which was disappointing. When asked why so slight a sketch had been admitted, Underwood replied, "When a boy goes a-fishing and catches a small fish, he puts it into his basket for luck, hoping to catch a big one by and by." The magazine caught a big one indeed when, a few months later, The Minister's Wooing began to appear in its pages.

To that first number Emerson contributed, besides an essay, four short poems, one of them the mystical Brahma, which was to be more talked

about and puzzled over and parodied than any other poem of sixteen lines published within my recollection. "What does it mean?" was the question readers everywhere asked; and if one had the reputation of seeing a little way into the Concord philosophy, he was liable at any time to be stopped on the street by some perplexed inquirer, who would draw him into the nearest doorway, produce a crumpled newspaper clipping from the recesses of a waistcoat pocket, and with knitted brows exclaim, "Here! you think you understand Emerson; now tell me what all this is about, — '*If the red slayer think he slays,*'" and so forth.

Longfellow contributed his beautiful tribute to Florence Nightingale, Santa Filomena; Lowell had a versified fable and a sonnet; and there was a paper by Motley, whose early novels of Morton's Hope and Merry Mount had been forgotten, while his Rise of the Dutch Republic had suddenly placed him in the front rank of living historians. But the great surprise of the number was a contribution which, if not by a new hand, showed that a new force had entered into our literature; the first of a series of papers of inimitable wit and brilliancy, by a hand that never seemed to grow old nor to lose its wonderful facility, until it was laid to rest in Mount Auburn, — the hand of the

kindly and beloved Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table.

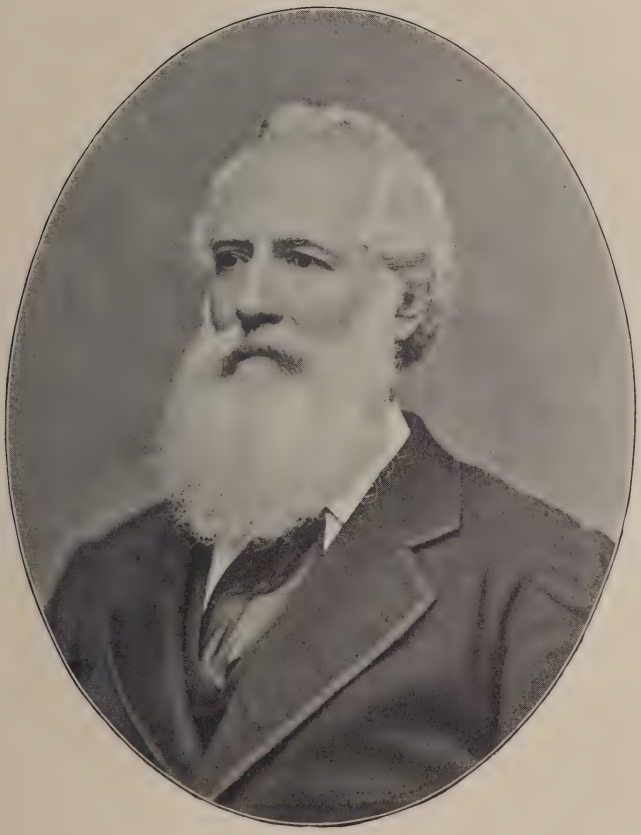
I was the youngest, and, with a single exception, am now the sole survivor of the group of contributors to that first number.

Underwood enjoyed greatly his position on the magazine. Every article offered passed through his hands, but though he possessed unlimited power of rejection, the power of final acceptance rested solely with Lowell. Yet Underwood was not merely the coarse sieve this might imply. He often made up the numbers, subject, however, to Lowell's approval; he conferred with authors, and he was himself also a contributor. He had done a useful work in uniting the forces that combined to originate the magazine, but the character of it was entirely the creation of Lowell.

VII

The death of Mr. Phillips and the subsequent breaking up of the firm in 1859 resulted in the severance of Underwood's connection with the magazine. He soon found other employment, and held successively, under Cleveland's two administrations, the positions of consul at Glasgow and at Edinburgh.

Abroad, his fine presence, his public addresses and after-dinner speeches, and more particularly



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his lectures on American Men of Letters, made him a prominent figure in society; and the University of Glasgow recognized his distinction by conferring upon him the degree of LL. D.

He had a varied, an interesting, and on the whole an enviable career, which closed in Edinburgh in 1894. He found unfailing enjoyment in literature, music, and art, in friendship and in congenial labor; and his love of nature remained fresh and vigorous to the last. He wrote biographical sketches of Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell; compiled handbooks of American and English literature; and was the author of two or three novels. Undoubtedly, his representative work, the work by which Dr. Underwood will be best remembered, is Quabbin, the Story of a Small Town, his own native Enfield, written in Glasgow in an interval of leisure between his two consulships. In the work on which he was engaged at the time of his death, The Builders of American Literature, only one volume of which was completed and published, occur these words regarding an earlier man of letters: "The literary world has need of such accomplished and industrious writers, and could often spare more brilliant men," — words that will apply with equal justice to Francis Henry Underwood himself.

VIII

The starting of The Atlantic was to me an event of vital interest and importance. It was a distinction for a young writer to appear in its pages. The pay for contributions was for those days unprecedentedly liberal, and the hospitality of its covers afforded a stimulus to high endeavor. I contributed to the early volumes poems, stories, sketches of travel, and one political paper, We are a Nation, into which I poured the fervor of my patriotic feeling, on the second election of Lincoln.

I had followed as faithfully as I could Major Noah's advice as to writing prose instead of poetry. Having burned my metrical romances, I wrote verse only at intervals for the next ten years. Then with the ampler leisure gained by the publication of my books, I returned to my early love. I find, on looking back, that I contributed to the first volumes of The Atlantic articles in verse oftener than anything else, among them some of my most prosperous poems, At Sea, Midsummer, The Pewee, and another that had such unusual fortunes, and regarding which I am so often questioned, that I will give a brief account of it here.

As long ago as the summer of 1855 I saw in the streets of Paris a strolling showman with a troupe of six trained dogs. The appearance of the man,

his good-humored drollery, evidently masking more serious traits of character, and his almost human relations with his patient, dumb friends, must have impressed me more than I was aware; for, after my return to America the year following, he came up in my mind as the subject of a dramatic sketch, which soon began to sing itself in rhyme. I discarded five of the dogs, in order to concentrate attention and sympathy upon one; and allowed the master to tell his own story, with which I seemed to have little more to do than to put it into form. When about half written it was thrown aside for work I deemed more immediately important, and the fragment lay neglected in my desk for two or three years. Then one day I chanced to look it over just before setting out on a long ramble; more stanzas began to link themselves to those freshly called up in my memory, and by the time I returned from my walk I had the poem ready to commit to paper in its nearly completed shape. I was then at a loss to know what to do with it; for I did not imagine that the only magazine I was in those days sending poems to would welcome anything so vagabondish as The Vagabonds. I read it to a few friends, who listened to it with moist eyes, but who confirmed my misgivings as to its having sufficient dignity for The Atlantic. So it went back into my desk, to lie there two or

three years longer, until one who had come to be nearer to me than all others, reading it or hearing it read, with joy and tears declared that it must be published at once. I took her advice, but in sending it forth I was careful to accompany it with another poem, sufficiently literary, By the River, which I thought would serve to keep my Vagabonds in countenance. Proofs of the one in which I had least confidence were the first to come to me for correction, and on a margin appeared the surprising note in blue pencil, — "Perfectly beautiful, nothing could be finer in its way — whom by?" the proof-reader's query addressed to the editor, The Atlantic contributions in those days being unsigned.

Once more I heard from it before it reached the public, Mr. James T. Fields (then editor) having given an advance copy to an elocutionist, and heard him read it with "wonderful effect," he assured me, one evening at Mr. Longfellow's house in Cambridge. Fields then predicted for it a great success on lyceum platforms; astonishing me by saying that, for public recitation, there had been nothing like it since Poe's Raven.

To Fields I was indebted for the name of the dog, "Roger;" a circumstance I had forgotten, but which was recalled to mind when, some time after, Mrs. Fields showed me in their house on

Charles Street an album of autograph poems, — many of them by writers the most famous of the day, — bound up with which I discovered the original manuscript copy of The Vagabonds, with the word "Roger" in Fields's well-known hand, written over the less euphonious name (whatever it may have been) that I had bestowed on the wandering fiddler's companion.

The poem received universal commendation from the press, with a single noticeable exception; almost every writer has his one especial, never-failing, unrelenting, untiring assailant in the ranks of the critics, and I had mine. The magazine number containing it (March, 1863) had been out a short time, when my oldest sister wrote to me from Illinois to ask if I could tell her anything about the author of that strange poem, The Vagabonds. She went on to say, "I cannot help feeling that it was written by a person who has gone through some such terrible experience of intemperance and misery as he describes." I hastened to inform her that the author was a no more dissipated wretch than her own younger brother, whose art she had complimented in suspecting his sobriety of character.

The piece was taken up by public readers all over the country, and I soon heard of it in places as remote as Melbourne and Shanghai. Often

one would come to recite it to me, under the pretense of asking for criticism and suggestion, but in reality to get some written word of approval that might help him with the public. To one who brought letters commendatory of his art from such men as Horace Greeley, Dr. Bellows, and Bayard Taylor, I said, with the absolute sincerity I used towards all, — "I have heard others deliver the poem, and I must do you the justice to declare that I never heard any one begin to read it as badly as you do." His theatrical mannerisms and false intonations caused me to ask to look again at the letters; but they were undoubtedly genuine. How he could ever have obtained them was a marvel and a mystery. After some discussion, I said to him at parting, "You feel a little hard towards me now, but some time you will see that I have done the kindest thing in my power by telling you the truth." He went from me to an eminent elocutionist, recited The Vagabonds to him, elicited his criticisms, and then explained why he wished for them: "I lately read it to the author, and was unwilling to accept his judgment of my rendering, but you have corroborated it in every particular."

The most powerful interpretation of the poem I ever listened to in private was by that exceedingly clever personator, Sol Smith Russell; the

best public ones were by Professor Churchill, of the Andover Theological Seminary, and James E. Murdock, the actor. It was even taken up by women elocutionists, one of whom, a talented lecturer and entertainer, produced with it an effect that was at least novel, through the contrast between the vagabondish character represented and her own elegant manners and fashionable attire.

A holiday edition of the poem, with drawings by F. O. C. Darley, was brought out at Christmas time, 1863; and I afterwards made The Vagabonds the leading poem of my first volume of collected verse.

IX

Of my Atlantic stories the most important was Coupon Bonds, which after its appearance in two numbers of the magazine (Sept. and Oct., 1865) was in such demand that a large separate edition was issued in paper covers. Bankers became interested in its distribution; and one of the most active in popularizing the enormous loans necessitated by the war, himself once assured me that the story had an appreciable influence in stimulating confidence in the government and its securities.

A play constructed from it mainly by the use of paste and scissors was brought out by Miss

Alcott and her friends in Concord; other versions were produced in different places, the author of one of which threatened to sue the chief promoter of the Concord play (Mr. G. B. Bartlett) for infringement of copyright. I then made a careful dramatic version, which I copyrighted and published; it was for a long time in lively demand, and is still acted by amateur companies.

I remember but one serious criticism of the naturalness of the incidents and characters in the story; and that was a sound one, from the critic's point of view. Some friends of mine once visited a well-to-do Western farmer, who maintained that nobody was ever so anxious about the safety of valuable documents as the Ducklows were about their coupon bonds. Being left by themselves in the family sitting-room, one of the party took up a book from the table and dropped out of it upon the carpet a folded paper. It was a thousand-dollar government bond; and probably not the only one that might have been picked up, lying about the house.

The sketches of travel I contributed to The Atlantic were two, descriptive of the battle-fields of Gettysburg and the Wilderness which I visited after the close of the war, as I shall relate farther on; A Carpet Bagger in Pennsylvania, three papers on the coal and oil regions of that State in 1869;

and in the following year three articles giving an account of a trip to the wilds of Minnesota and to a then new settlement at the head of Lake Superior, — the rough cocoon of the city of subsequent marvelous growth and prosperity, Duluth.

X

In the mean time had occurred an event to which I have briefly alluded in my notice of Underwood, but which deserves fuller mention, since it was to me, at the time of it, almost a calamity. The first publishers of The Atlantic were, as I have stated, likewise the publishers of my books. The death of Mr. Sampson and that of Mr. Phillips, which took place soon after, led to the breaking up of the firm, in the fall of 1859, and the sale at auction of its enormous stock of books and sheets and stereotype plates. My own books went to a New York house, that of a stepmother, so to speak, very different from the home where they had been born, their exile from which I felt as a personal grief.

Fortunately The Atlantic went into good hands, those of Ticknor & Fields; regarding which acquisition by the latter firm it is interesting to note that it was a project of the elder and, one would have supposed, the more conservative member, while it was opposed by the junior, whose

literary tastes and associations with authors would have seemed likely to render him the more earnest of the two in its favor. The price looked formidably large for those days, and Mr. Fields deemed it too hazardous an undertaking. If he had been on the ground he might have thought differently; but he was abroad, and could be consulted only by transatlantic communication. The sum involved ($10,000) was in truth a moderate one, considering the enormous prestige of the reputation of the magazine, and of its galaxy of writers, and in view of all the advantages secured to the house making the purchase; at all events the senior's courage and sound judgment were abundantly vindicated. My contributions to it continued, and resulted for me later in intimate business relations with that firm and its successors.

CHAPTER VIII

CUDJO'S CAVE AND OTHER WAR STORIES — A NEW HOME

I

POLITICAL convulsion succeeded the dissolution of the firm of Phillips, Sampson & Co., and brought new discouragement, in addition to that caused by the loss of their friendly interest in my books. The Southern sky was black with clouds that burst in the Civil War. I was still writing for the magazines, and also applying myself, rather languidly, to another work of fiction, when the great national conflict, which had set back the waters of my literary course, forced them with accumulated impetus into a new channel.

Having allayed the excitement which impelled me to write one antislavery novel, I did not entertain the possibility of ever being moved to write another. Political events rushed rapidly to a crisis, which came with the election of Lincoln, and brought to exultant souls the certainty that the encroachments of the slave power had at last reached a barrier forever impossible for it to over-

pass. The war of secession was a war of emancipation from the start. It could not be otherwise, whether the actors engaged in it wished it so or not; campaigns and acts of Congress, battles and proclamations, victories and defeats, were not so much causes or hindrances as eddies of the stream in whose mighty movement they were formed and swept along.

I was eager to bear my own humble part in the momentous conflict, and took up again the only weapon I had any skill to use. I wrote a patriotic story, The Drummer Boy; not especially designed as an attack upon slavery, more than any word uttered or blow struck for the Union was a word or blow aimed at the enemy striving to destroy it. But the old heat was fevering me, and no sooner was The Drummer Boy hurried on his mission than I flung myself upon the writing of as fiery an antislavery fiction as I was capable of compassing. The country had been but slowly awakening to a consciousness of the truth that the slave was not only to be freed; he was also to cease to be a merely passive occasion of the contest, and to become our active ally. Too many calling themselves patriots still opposed emancipation and the arming of the blacks, and clung tremblingly to the delusion that the Union and slavery might both be preserved. The idol-house of the old preju-

dice was shattered, but not demolished. I was impatient to hurl my firebrand into the breach.

II

In this case I had a title for my novel before a page of it was written. Wishing to bring into it some incidents of guerrilla warfare and of the persecutions of the Union men in the border slave States, I cast about for some central fact to give unity to the action, and form at the same time a picturesque feature of the narrative. The idea of a cave somehow suggested itself, and I chose for the scene a region where such things exist. As no especial economy was required in its construction, I thought I might as well have a cavern of some magnificence; or rather, I thought little about it, — the whole thing flashed upon me like a vision, as I lay awake one night, with my imagination aflame, lighting up that strange world under the eyelids so vivid amid the surrounding dark. The cave, the burning forest, and the fire-lit waterfall, with much of the plan of the drama, all came to me, as I recall, in those two or three hours of intensely concentrated thought. I adopted *Cave* at once as part of my title, but felt that it was necessary to make some felicitous addition. I was some time, indeed many nights and days, in finding a fit name for my runaway

slave, who was to inhabit the cavern and help me out with my title. *Cudjo* was finally decided upon for him, and *Cudjo's Cave* for the book. But the hero of it was not Cudjo, although I no longer shrank from giving a black man that rôle. Neither was it the young Quaker, turned fighter; Penn Hapgood was only the ostensible hero. The real hero, if the story had one, was the proud and powerful, full-blooded African, Pomp, whom I afterwards carried forward into the third and last of my war stories, The Three Scouts.

Cudjo's Cave was a partisan book, frankly designed to fire the Northern heart. This was, perhaps, the chief of its many faults. It contained scenes of violence such as I should never, under other circumstances, have selected as subjects for my pen. I adapted, but did not invent them; the most sensational incidents had their counterparts in the reign of wrath and wrong I was endeavoring to hold up to the abhorrence of all lovers of the Union and haters of slavery and secession. The art of the book suffered also from the disadvantage I labored under of never having visited the region I described, or studied the dialect of the people. The result was something quite different from what discriminating readers have noticed in Neighbor Jackwood, where, almost unconsciously to the author, the

dialect became so much a part of the characters that no two of them, not even members of the same family, are made to talk just alike, but each has his or her own persistent peculiarities of speech. The fault I speak of lay deeper, however, than the dialect. The characters of the later novel were portrayed more from without; those of the earlier one, from within. But though lacking in true emotional depth, the inferior work had an external life and an impetuous movement which gave it vogue, and enabled it to carry something of the political influence it was intended to convey.

III

It was written with great rapidity in the summer and autumn of 1863, and published in December. It was issued by a young and enterprising firm that displayed considerable ingenuity and no little audacity in advertising it. Pictures of the cave were on envelopes and posters, and I remember a bookseller's window on Washington Street rendered attractive by a pile of the freshly bound volumes erected in the similitude of a cave. A private letter to the author from Secretary Chase, then at the zenith of his fame as a national financier, was made to do service in ways he could hardly have anticipated any more than I did when

the publishers obtained permission of him to use it. It was printed, and extensively copied by the press, and the interior of every street-car in Boston was placarded with a signed extract from it, outstaring the patient public week after week in a manner that would have made the great Secretary wince, could he have seen it, as it did me.

The publishers' methods combined with the circumstances of the time to secure immediate popularity for the book, — a popularity it still continues in a measure to enjoy, having long outlived the occasion that called it forth, and the existence of the firm that launched it so successfully.

In a journey through the Southern States at the close of the war (as will be related in the succeeding chapter) I paid a visit to East Tennessee, and was pleased to find that I had not gone far wrong in my descriptions of the region where the scenes of the story are laid. But I failed to get any authentic news of the actors in it, or to discover the precise locality of the cave. I have lately been told that there is somewhere in the vicinity of Cumberland Gap a cave which guides and hotel-keepers claim as the original and only Cudjo's. I have never seen it.

Before proceeding to write of the Southern tour alluded to, it is necessary to go back in my narrative and take up one or two dropped stitches.

IV

For about eight years I had my residence in Boston at No. 1 Seaver Place; then, in November, 1858, I went to live on Prospect Hill, in Somerville, in the home of Mr. Alonzo Newton, — a sightly abode, with the great green billow of the hill (since shorn away) rising beyond, and the grass-overgrown ridges of the ancient fortifications not more than two or three minutes' walk from our door. There Prescott and his compatriots intrenched themselves after Bunker Hill; and from that natural observatory Washington must have pondered the military situation and his country's dubious cause, many a summer's day during the siege of Boston, and in lonely night hours, looking off at the lights of Boston town, and the line of rebel camp-fires twinkling here and there, from Mystic River near by to far-away Dorchester Heights.

The old earthworks were my daily resort, and there on the loftiest embankment was for years a footpath which my solitary steps had worn and kept open, as in all weathers, under sun or moon and stars, I paced that quarter-deck of the great ship sailing the universal deep. There I fashioned my poems or studied my plots (that of Cudjo among them), walking to and fro, to and fro, in

the deepening gloom of evening, amidst a galaxy of near and innumerable distant lights ; or by day, with many cities and villages outspread before and around, the ribbons of two rivers flowing to form their large bow just at the harbor's gleaming throat; the more distant sea flashing in the morning sun, and the wide horizon undulating to wooded crests of dreamy blue.

To that home I brought my young wife, Cornelia Warren, of Lowell, early in May, 1860 ; and there we lived, except for absences long or short at the mountains or the seaside, and one longer sojourn in West Cambridge, until, after a brief illness, she died in March, 1864, leaving one child, a boy infant six weeks old. Of that four years' dream of happiness, and of her whose loveliness of character had inspired it, I can say no more in this place than that

> "Such things were,
> That were most precious to me."

The baby boy — who, I will add, inherited largely his mother's fairness of features and charm of character — fell into such tender hands that he never knew the loss he had sustained. He was a tie that united me more closely still to the Newton family; the mother cherished him with a mother's pride and love; and he became the special care of the oldest daughter, then a girl

WINDSOR WARREN TROWBRIDGE

In his fifth year

of sixteen, who nine years later took the vacant place which I had long thought would never again be filled, and became his mother indeed.[1]

Meanwhile I acquired the home I now occupy, in Arlington (then West Cambridge), and took my boy there with the Newton friends in June, 1865. It is located on one of the pleasantest streets in the suburbs of Boston, — a street rightly named "Pleasant." Hardly a week passed before I had my sail-boat on the lake. Wild woods were within five minutes' walk from my dooryard gate. So perfect was my contentment in this quiet home that I could think of no inducement that would take me farther from it than Boston, six or seven miles away, for at least a year or two to come. Yet I was no more than settled in it, with my first flowers blooming and my hens cackling in the poultry yard, when I was summoned to set off on an adventure full of uncertainty and of doubtful duration.

One day early in August I was called upon by a Hartford publisher, Mr. L. Stebbins, who had been soliciting me, by correspondence, to write a book for him, to be "sold only by subscription." The devastating Civil War had then recently closed, and the subject of the volume was to be a descrip-

[1] Windsor Warren Trowbridge died at Colorado Springs, in March, 1884, having just completed his 20th year.

tion of the principal battle-fields and the condition of the States lately in rebellion. Mr. Stebbins had first proposed the work to Bayard Taylor, whose engagements would not permit him to undertake it, but who said to him, with an emphasis that seemed to have been convincing, that I was the man for it. So Mr. Stebbins had come from Hartford to see me, not at all disturbed by my having declined his proposal by letter, and thinking, as he said, that "a personal interview might be useful."

"It won't be useful at all, Mr. Stebbins," I made answer. "I have been only two months in my new home here, and I would n't leave it to make a rough journey through the Southern States, at this time of year, for any inducement you can hold out."

"It is a favorable season for the trip," he replied. "You will go first to Gettysburg, Chambersburg, Harper's Ferry, Washington, and so 'on to Richmond;' and by that time it will be cool weather."

To my further objection that I was writing for Ticknor & Fields' magazines, and was bound to furnish an article every month for one of them, he replied, —

"You can arrange that; and I see no reason why you should n't print in them a few chapters,

as you prepare them for the book, — say five or six; they might help to advertise it."

This was a weighty argument. Still I demurred, laying stress upon the great number of books about the South that were sure to be written and published during the coming year, and on the risk of such an undertaking.

"There will be no risk to you, as far as money matters are concerned," he answered with quiet promptness. "All your expenses will be paid, and I think I can make the remuneration satisfactory."

I asked what he meant by satisfactory; and he named a sum that interested me. In buying my new home I had left a mortgage on the place which I expected to be two or three years in paying off; and here was an opportunity of lifting the incumbrance by a few months' hard work, and of adding, besides, a goodly sum to my bank account. The journey through parts of the desolated South, where society was still in a chaotic state, would undoubtedly be attended by hardships, discomforts, and some danger. But it would afford an opportunity of seeing those States in that tremendous crisis of their history, in the paroxysm intervening between the periods of subjugation and emancipation and of hardly yet attempted reconstruction. The pecuniary consider-

ation justified the trip, and I saw advantages in it, against which no allurements of home and peaceful pursuits, or other sentimental reasons, should be allowed to have weight.

I proposed some modification of the terms offered, to which Mr. Stebbins cheerfully acceded. I conferred with Mr. Fields, as to contributions to the two magazines during my absence; and within a week's time from my interview with Mr. Stebbins started off on my journey with a light heart and no incumbrance but a traveling shawl and a stout valise.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOUTH AFTER THE WAR

I

I PROCEEDED as directly as possible to Gettysburg, where I spent several days studying the battle-field, gathering anecdotes of that great and decisive conflict, and writing out my observations. From there I went to Chambersburg, which the rebel invaders had burnt; then by the way of South Mountain and Antietam to Harper's Ferry, the place of John Brown's sanguinary last fight and capture; and thence to Charlestown, the scene of his hurried trial and execution.

I looked in vain for any traces of those closing events in the brave but visionary old man's life. The jail in which he was confined had been burned to the ground. The court house was a melancholy ruin, abandoned to rats and toads; four massy white brick pillars, still standing, supported a riddled roof, through which the tranquil sky and gracious sunshine smiled. Names of Union soldiers were scrawled along the walls. The work of destruction had been performed by

the hands of those hilarious boys in blue to the tune of "John Brown" — the swelling melody of the song and the accompaniment of crashing timbers reminding the citizens, who thought to have destroyed the old hero, that his "soul was marching on."

I asked a bright young colored girl to point out the spot where John Brown's gallows stood. She led across barren fields outside the town, and into a wilderness of flowering and seeding weeds, waist high to her as she tramped on, parting them before her with her hands.

"Here is about where it was," she said, stopping in the midst of the desolation. "Nobody knows now just where the gallows stood. There was a tree here, but that has been cut down and carried away, stump and roots and all, by folks that wanted something to remember John Brown by."

I stood a long time on the spot, amid the gracefully drooping golden-rods, and looked at the same sky old John Brown looked his last on, the same groves, and the distant Blue Ridge, the sight of whose cerulean summits, clad in softest heavenly light, must have conveyed a sweet assurance to his soul.

The jail in ashes, the court house in ruins, and a neighboring church that was turned into a stable by Union troopers and had not yet been cleansed

of the abomination, were, on a small scale and in a mild way, typical of the devastation I was to witness throughout my Southern journey, wherever the harrow of war had left its trace.

II

About the last of August I reached Washington, where I remained ten or twelve days, writing out my notes, gathering material for new ones, and seeing old friends and new acquaintances. Whitelaw Reid, who had lately accompanied Chief Justice Chase in his coastwise Southern tour on a United States revenue cutter, and was then preparing his book, After the War, went with me over the Bull Run battle-fields, and gave me from his own experience valuable hints as to what was before me. To one-armed General O. O. Howard, a brave man and true, I was indebted for much useful information, a general letter of introduction to military heads of departments, and this cheerful bit of advice as to the guerrillas and Yankee-haters I might meet: "Let them kill you if they want to!"

Chief Justice Chase (my old friend, of whom I shall have much to say in another place), fresh from his own Southern tour, expressed great interest in my trip, and saying, "Excuse me a moment," turned to write a letter at his desk.

He handed it to me unsealed, with the remark, "Perhaps this may be of some use to you." It was a general letter of introduction, cordially commending me "to all with whom his opinion might have weight." It proved of very great use to me indeed.

General Garfield I met on the street quite unexpectedly, not knowing that he was then in Washington. Tall, well-proportioned, broad-minded, urbane, how well I remember him and his hearty handshake as, having heard whither I was bound, he bade me good-speed on my mission! This was the last time I ever spoke with him, although I afterwards saw him on two or three occasions on the floor of Congress. Not many of his friends then imagined that he had before him, in a not very remote future, the great goal of the Presidency, which he was to reach only to be hurled from that height by a petty assassin's mad act.

III

A breezy trip of three hours by steamer down the Potomac, from Washington, brought me to Acquia Creek, and I was at once in the track of our armies in the famous "on-to-Richmond" campaigns.

Fredericksburg, which I reached that afternoon, was still half in ruins, with broken walls, and soli-

tary chimney stacks standing like grim sentinels over foundations overgrown with weeds and thistles. I rode into the city on the top of a coach beside a vivacious expressman, who was carrying in his tin box fifty pardons from President Johnson to prominent Virginia rebels. In talking with him I for the first time in my life realized fully what "State pride" was. To hear him pronounce the word *V-i-r-g-i-n-ia*, dwelling with rich intonations on the luscious vowels and consonants, was as good as eating a peach. "I believe my State is worth all the rest of the Union," he exclaimed, with excited countenance, lip curled, and eye in a fine frenzy. He had been opposed to secession, but State pride had carried him with her into the war.

In singular contrast with him was a sturdy old man whom I met in Fredericksburg. Pointing out the havoc made by Burnside's shells, he exclaimed bitterly, —

"You see the result of the vanity of Virginia!"

I asked him if he was a Virginian. "I am; but that is no reason why I should be blind to the faults of my State."

"You were not much in favor of secession?" I suggested.

"In favor of it!" he exclaimed, kindling. "Didn't they have me in jail here nine weeks

because I would n't vote for it? Now look at this ruined city! the farms and plantations laid waste! the rich reduced to poverty, young men and boys with one leg, one arm, or one hand! the broken families, the tens of thousands of graves! It is all the result of vanity! vanity!" which seemed but another name for "State pride."

To these samples of the endless variety of characters and conversations I was to meet and make note of on my tour through Secessia, I will add one more here. From Fredericksburg I was driven out to the field of Spottsylvania by a pleasant-featured young fellow, who, like many of the young men, white and black, I had seen in that region, wore United States Army trousers.

"Dar was right smart o' trad'n' done in Yankee clo'es, last years of de war," he explained.

I asked, "Did you rob a dead soldier of those you have on?"

"No; I bought dese in Fredericksburg. I never robbed a dead man." When I suggested that they might have been taken from a dead soldier by some one else, he replied stoically, "Mought be; but it could n't be ho'ped" (helped). "A po' man can't be choice."

He used "de" for "the" almost invariably, with many other expressions that betrayed early asso-

ciation with negroes. He told me his name was Richard H. Hicks.

I asked, "What is your middle name?"

"I hain't got no middle name."

"What does the 'H.' stand for?"

"'H.' stands for Hicks; Richard H. Hicks; dat's what dey tell me." He could n't read; had never been to school; "never had no chance to learn."

This confession somehow touched me with a sadness I had not felt even at the sight of unburied or half-buried dead men in the woods. Young, active, naturally intelligent, he was himself dead to a world without which this would seem to us a blank, the world of literature. I thought of Shakespeare, David, the prophets, the poets, the historians and romancers, and as my mind glanced from name to name on the glittering entablatures, I seemed to be standing in a glorious temple with a blind youth by my side. I asked if he had ever heard of Walter Scott.

"No, I never heard of dat Scott; but I know a William Scott."

"Or of a great English poet called Lord Byron?"

"No; I never knowed dar was such a man."

What a gulf betwixt his mind and mine! Sitting side by side on the buggy seat, we were as

far asunder as the great globe's poles. He was a common product of Southern institutions, such as in rural New York or New England it would be impossible to find.

IV

On the fields of Spottsylvania, Chancellorsville, and the Wilderness, — if they could be called fields, which were largely overgrown with scrub oaks and dwarfish pines and cedars, — I came upon evidences of the most terrible fighting which the four years' conflict had witnessed ; for this was the sanguinary course of which Grant had declared, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." I passed whole thickets that had been killed by the horizontal leaden hail and left standing like fields of huddled bean poles ; groves of larger trees, cut entirely off by bullets, the stubs remaining like enormous scrub-brooms pointing towards heaven ; planks from the plank-roads piled up and lashed against trees, to form a shelter for pickets ; a woman and a child, with knapsack and pail, stolidly picking up bullets, as if they had been gathering chincapins, as I at first thought they were ; knapsacks and haversacks, in heaps or scattered ; pieces of rotted clothing, fragments of harness, tin plates and canteens (some pierced with balls) ; rusted fragments of shells,

with here and there a round shot or a shell unexploded; straps, buckles, cartridge-boxes, old shoes; and, ghastlier than all else, now and then a stray skull or an entire skeleton, which the burying parties had overlooked in out-of-the-way places; or the hideous half-resurrection of the dead that had been laid in graves too shallow, where the rain-washed soil exposed a breast bone, a grinning jaw, or fleshless toes sticking out.

I sometimes found old letters strewing the ground, often torn and half-decayed, and with the characters faded and blurred by fierce suns and drenching storms. And beside one of Grant's intrenchments I picked up the mildewed fragment of a German pocket Testament. Strangely enough, in this Gehenna of human sacrifice and innumerable unknown graves, these were the words that caught my eye, on the hardly legible leaf: —

"Die du mir gegeben hast, die habe ich bewahret, und ist keiner von ihnen verloren."

"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost."

V

On the fifteenth of September I took the train at Fredericksburg for Richmond, and covered in three hours the space which our troops were more than as many years in fighting their way over.

It was with strange emotions that I entered the city which the storm of war had still left beautiful, although she seemed to be mourning for her sins in dust and ashes, — dust which every wind whirled up from the unwatered streets, and the ashes of the Burnt District.

I was rather homesick at first, in a hotel that afforded me very poor accommodations; but this I soon exchanged for one fronting on Capitol Square, and was happy when, throwing open the shutters of the room assigned me, I looked out on the park, the State Capitol (which had also been the Capitol of the Confederacy), Crawford's colossal equestrian statue of Washington soaring amid the trees, and the far-off, shining James. I could always be happy anywhere with a quiet room for study and seclusion, and a fair outlook.

I carried letters of introduction to Governor Pierpont, executive under the new régime, and his private secretary, General Strother, author and artist, who, over the pseudonym of "Porte Crayon," illustrated his own magazine articles; to General Terry, commander of the military department, and his chief of staff, General J. R. Hawley, now Senator Hawley of Connecticut; to the assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau, and to others who had assimilated a vast deal of information about the anomalous conditions I had

come to study, and who were obligingly ready to impart it. Generals Terry and Hawley treated me with the utmost kindness, furnishing me with an army horse, and one of the staff for a guide, for trips which I could not well make on foot or on wheels. My boyish habit of horseback exercise on the farm, or riding for cattle or game on the prairies of Illinois, had quickly come back, and I was to find it exceedingly useful during my Southern tour.

On a corner opposite my hotel, with a spire clean as a stiletto, was St. Paul's Church, where President Jefferson Davis heard the gospel preached from the slave-owner's point of view; and where he sat in his pew on that memorable Sunday morning, when Lee's dispatch was handed to him, announcing that Richmond was lost. Not very far away was St. John's Church, whose ancient walls reëchoed Patrick Henry's renowned speech, since spouted by schoolboys, — "Give me liberty or give me death!" — two widely contrasted scenes, affording food for reflection.

I paid an early visit to the halls of the late Confederate Congress, in the State Capitol; where it was my fortune to set on foot a movement pleasant to remember. I found the halls a scene of dust and confusion; the desks and seats had been ripped up, and workmen were engaged in sweeping

out the last vestiges of Confederate rule. The furniture had gone to an auction room, to be sold under the hammer; I reported the fact to a member of the American Union Commission (supported by Northern benevolence), who was looking for furniture to be used in the freedmen's schools, and he made haste to bid in the relics. I could fancy no finer stroke of poetical justice than the conversion of the seats on which sat the legislators of the great slave empire, and the desks on which they wrote, into seats and desks for negro children and adults learning to read.

VI

Among the many interesting or astonishing sights awaiting me, in and around Richmond, I must mention one, the like of which I was often to witness throughout the devastated South. This was the issuing of what were called "destitute rations" by the United States Commissary, to hungry-looking, haggard crowds, — sickly faced women, jaundiced old men, and children in rags; with here and there a seedy gentleman who had seen better days, or a stately female in faded apparel, which, like her refined manners, betrayed the aristocratic lady whom war and emancipation had reduced to want. Colored people were not permitted to draw rations for themselves at the same

place with the whites; but there were among these a good many colored servants "drawing" for their mistresses, who remained at home, too ill or too proud to come in person and present the tickets issued to them by the Relief Commission.

At the place where "destitute rations" were issued for the blacks, business appeared dull; a surprising circumstance considering that the colored population then crowded into Richmond about equaled the white population. In the book I was preparing I endeavored to trace the reasons for this discrepancy; which I pass over here, having mentioned the subject at all, merely to draw attention to the policy of our government, unprecedented in the world's history, of following its victorious armies with stores to feed a conquered province and with express-boxes full of pardons for its enemies. Great stress, not unjustly, has been laid upon the corruption of the carpet-bag governments that undertook, in the interests of Federal Union and of the enfranchised blacks, the reconstruction of the States that had been in rebellion. Corrupt enough they in many cases were, without question. But the wrongs committed by them were as passing shadows in the splendor of the magnanimity shown to a vanquished foe.

In Virginia, as in other parts of the South, I found those who had been in the Confederate ranks

generally the most ready to resume their loyalty to the flag they had fought against. The Secessionists who had kept out of the war were the most persistent and the most violent in their hatred of the restored Union. The female Secessionists were bitterest of all. They would yield nothing even to the logic of events. To appeal to their reason was idle; but they were vulnerable on the side of the sentiments; and many a fair one was converted from the heresy of state rights by some handsome Federal officer, who judiciously mingled love with loyalty in his addresses, and pleaded for the union of hands as well as the union of States.

VII

From Fortress Monroe, as I stated in my narrative, I was called home by an affair of business requiring my attention. That affair, I may explain here, was the putting through the press of a hundred pages or more of my forthcoming book, to form a "dummy" of sample chapters and contents, for the use of agents in soliciting subscriptions.

The return home at that time was extremely fortunate, for I had already received into my system seeds of a distemper, which developed into a severe and prolonged siege of bilious fever, — the first serious illness to which my constitution had

ever succumbed. I could never believe that this was caused by overwork or change of climate and diet; for the life agreed with me, and I grew robust and bronzed, until the first insidious symptoms appeared, brought on by the "wulgar error" (as an admirer of Sam Weller suggested) of not putting enough whiskey in my water, during the warm September days I passed in Richmond, when I was possessed by an abnormal thirst. The distressing sickness, of a month's duration, I could have borne with equanimity but for my impatience to get back to my work, and my anxiety on account of the publisher, who had so large a risk in my ability to carry it to completion. But in this crisis, as in all my relations with him, he was courageous and generous to the last degree. He expressed himself as highly satisfied with what I had done thus far, begged me not to exert myself until I was fully recovered, and proceeded to prepare the "dummy" for his canvassers, who, all the following winter and spring, would be selling the book while I was completing it.

VIII

I resumed my Southern tour in December, passing through central and southwest Virginia into East Tennessee, where I was curious to observe the country and people I had attempted to depict

in Cudjo's Cave; and where I beheld so much that was dishearteningly prosaic and chilling to the imagination that I deemed myself fortunate in not having visited the scene before choosing it for the incidents and characters of my story.

A few farmers had comfortable-looking painted or brick houses; while scattered everywhere over the valleys and mountain slopes were poverty-stricken, weather-blackened little framed dwellings and log huts. Many of these were without windows, the inmates — as the custom was through a large part of the South — living by the daylight let in through open doors and the firelight from great wide chimneys. The villages were without sidewalks or paved streets. In Greenville I saw President Johnson's Tennessee home, a plain brick dwelling, with mud almost up to the front door.

The fires of the old war-time feuds were still burning. Secessionists who had assisted in the hanging and robbing of Union men were in jail or in exile. I saw later one of these fugitives who told me how homesickly he pined for the hills and dales of East Tennessee, which he thought the most delightful country in the world. But there was a rope "hanging from a tree for him there," and he could n't go back.

A Union man, whom I met on the abutment of

a burned railroad bridge at Strawberry Plain, was telling me about the rebel operations at that place, when a fine fellow came dashing into the village on horseback.

"There 's a dog-goned rebel now!" said my man, eyeing him with baleful glances. "He 's a rebel colonel just come back. He 'll get warned; and then if he don't leave, he must look out!"

It was useless to preach forgiveness and good will to men still burning with the memory of their wrongs.

The rebel spirit was still rampant in places where personal protection was afforded by the power it had lately fought. At the table of the Bell House, in Knoxville, a diner who sat near me called out to one of the waiters, a good-looking colored man, — "Here, boy!"

"My name is Dick," said the "boy," respectfully.

"You 'll answer to the name I call you, or I 'll blow a hole through you!" swore the gentleman. He proceeded, addressing the company, "Last week, in Chattanooga, I said to a nigger I found at the railroad, 'Here, Buck, show me the baggage-room.' He said, 'My name ain't Buck.' I just put my six-shooter to his head, and, by God! he did n't stop to think what his name was, but showed me what I wanted."

My pleasantest recollection of Chattanooga is the ascent of Lookout Mountain, from that place, on an army horse provided for me by General Gillem, who was in command there, and who gave me his orderly for an attendant. The orderly was an intelligent quadroon, who had been Grant's body servant in the early days of the war. He had much to say of the famous chief, whom he described as quiet, kind, a great smoker, very silent, and never excited; "a heavy sleeper and a heavy drinker."

"There was only one time when he appeared troubled in his mind; that was after the battle of Shiloh. About that time he seemed to wake up to the notion that he 'd got a big job to do; for he suddenly left off drink, and I never saw him take any whiskey after that."

Of Lookout Mountain, the scene of "fighting Joe Hooker's" famous "battle in the clouds," and of the incomparable view from the summit, with cloud shadows chasing each other over hazy ranges and misty vales, as far away as the eye could see, and with the long, bright, crooked Tennessee curving in to the very base of the mighty crags on which we stood, — of all this, and of other things that made that day golden in my memory, I can give here only a glimpse, or less than a glimpse, in passing.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

IX

My visit to Nashville chanced on the first anniversary of the battle which took place there, under the eyes of the citizens, on the fifteenth and sixteenth days of December, 1864, when Hood's army was annihilated, and a period put to rebel rule in the States Sherman had left behind him in his great "march to the sea."

The wife of a noted general officer who was in the thickest of the fight told me something of her experience, watching from the Capitol with a glass the movements of his troops, — the swift gallop of couriers, the charge, the repulse, the successful assault, the ground dotted with the slain, and the awful battle-cloud rolling over all, enfolding, as she at one time believed, his dead form with the rest. But he lived, and was present when she told me the story. The battle was no such fearful thing to the brave soldier in the midst of it as to the loving wife looking on.

At Nashville I saw Governor Brownlow, better known as "Parson Brownlow," whose published sayings, spiced by quaintness and wit, had given him a national reputation, remembered now by few. He was especially interesting to me as an outspoken convert from the proslavery doctrines he formerly advocated to the radical ideas which the

agitations of the time had shaken to the surface of society. His elevation to the high office of governor of the State had not tended to modify his style of conversation. He believed a rebel had no rights except to be "hung in this world and damned in the next." But this and similar expressions did not proceed so much from a vindictive nature as from a tendency to strong, extravagant statement, common in the West and South.

From the governor's I went over to the division headquarters to call on Major-General Thomas, — a very different type of native Southern man. Born and bred in Virginia, his patriotism was national, knowing no state boundaries. In appearance, he was the most lion-like of all the Union generals it was my good fortune to meet. Beside that magnificent live oak of a man, Governor Brownlow was a poplar, with sensitive leaves rustling in every wind. An imperturbable, strong character, never betrayed into excess by any excitement, the general's opinions, which he imparted freely, possessed great interest and value for me and my book.

X

On the trip by train from Nashville to Corinth I made acquaintance with a manly young Southerner, whose character enlisted my sympathy, and whose conversation I condense here, as a sample

of the hundreds of such with which my notebooks overflowed.

"We have lost our property, and we have been subjugated, but we brought it all on ourselves. Nobody that has n't experienced it knows anything about our suffering. I never did a day's work in my life, and don't know how to begin."

Speaking of the negroes: "We can't feel towards them as you do; I suppose we ought to, but it is n't possible. They 've always been our owned servants; we 've been used to having them mind us without a word of objection, and we can't bear anything else from them now. I was always kind to my slaves. I never whipped but two boys in my life, and one of them I whipped three weeks ago."

"When he was a free man?" I said.

"Yes; for I tell you that makes no difference in our feeling towards them. I sent him across the country for some goods. He came back with half the goods he ought to have got for the money. I may as well be frank, — it was a gallon of whiskey. There were five gentlemen at the house, and I wanted the whiskey for them. I told Bob he stole it. Afterwards he came into the room and stood by the door, — a big, strong fellow, twenty-three years old. I said, 'Bob, what do you want?' He said, 'I want satisfaction about the whiskey.'

He told me afterwards, he meant that he was n't satisfied I should think that he had stolen it, and he wanted to come to a good understanding about it. But I thought he wanted satisfaction gentlemen's fashion. I rushed for my gun. I 'd have shot him dead on the spot if my friends had n't held me. They said I 'd best not kill him, but that he ought to be whipped. I sent to the stable for a trace, and gave him a bull-dose with it, hard as I could lay on."

I asked if Bob made no resistance. "Oh, he knew better than that! my friends stood by to see me through. I was wrong, I know, but I was in a passion."

I said, "According to your own showing, some restraint seems to be necessary to you, and some protection for the negroes; on the whole, the Freedmen's Bureau is a good thing, is n't it?"

He smiled: "Maybe it is; yes, if the nigger is to be free, I reckon it is; but it 's a mighty bitter thing for us!"

XI

I have purposed keeping the Freedmen's Bureau and Freedmen's Schools as much as possible out of these reminiscences. But I cannot forbear recalling here a few observations made at that time, at Memphis and elsewhere, so little is now known

or remembered of what were then matters of such tremendous import.

The codes of the slave States prohibiting the teaching of the simplest rudiments of learning to the subject race, and denying to it the privileges of citizenship, had been rendered incongruous and obsolete by emancipation. The former kindly relations generally existing between masters and servants, as long as the servants humbly kept their place, had been violently disturbed or disrupted altogether; while the old prejudice against color, or any taint of it, had been intensified to a sort of mania in the dominant class by the freedmen's assumption of freedmen's rights. That this assumption was often insolent, and that many of the emancipated believed that their new-found liberty meant an endless orgy of idleness and indulgence, cannot be gainsaid. It would have been surprising had it been otherwise. But the real wonder was that such vast numbers of the suddenly disenthralled should have remained peaceable, patient, waiting for the promised deliverance that did not come, and in the mean while willing to work, even when work was offered them on worse than the old slave-driver's terms.

In that bewildering crisis the late masters were hardly more capable than the blacks of grasping the significance of events, or of appreciating their

new duties and opportunities. If they had understood the situation, and had had the wisdom and courage to lay aside their prejudices and take the leadership that belonged to them, in reëstablishing the ruptured relations on grounds of humanity and justice, there would have been little need of such an instrument of the government as the Freedmen's Bureau, and the portentous race-problem would have been nearer its natural solution than it has been at any time since that instrument was withdrawn. To say that such a course was not possible for them is not to impute to them any blame, but to state a simple fact.

The Bureau's function was to protect the freedmen and readjust their relations to the superior race. It regulated labor contracts, and saw that they were properly observed by employers and employed. Its courts were designed to adjudicate in cases that could not be safely intrusted to the civil courts. I watched carefully scores of cases decided by these tribunals, in different places, and do not remember one in which substantial justice was not done. No doubt exceptions occurred, but I do not believe they were more frequent than those which occur in common-law courts; and they were insignificant compared with the wholesale wrong to which the unprotected freedman would have been subjected in

communities where old slave codes and immemorial custom denied to him the "inalienable rights" of man. I have read in recent fiction, by writers whose memory does not go back so far as mine, farcical descriptions of acts attributed to agents of the Bureau, which, from my own observation in all the States I visited, I unhesitatingly pronounce exceptional, and the outgrowth of a later time, or absurdly exaggerated and impossible.

A great variety of business was brought before the Bureau. A negro man came to advertise a reward of fifty dollars for information that would help him find his wife and children, sold away from him in times of slavery. A white woman, who had been warned by the police that she must not live with her husband because he was black, claimed protection in her marriage relation, bringing proof that she was in reality "colored." A boy, formerly a slave, to whom his father, a freeman, willed some money, loaned it to his owner, who gave his note for it, but would never repay it, and now the boy came, pulling the worn and soiled bit of paper from his pocket, as proof of his claim for principal and interest. Such documentary evidence, long kept concealed, was serving to right many a wrong. I once saw a large package of wills, made in favor of slaves, usually by their white fathers, all of which had been suppressed

by the legitimate heirs. One, a mere rag, scarcely legible, had been carried sewed in the lining of a slave-woman's dress for more than forty years, the date of the will being 1823. By that instrument her son was legally emancipated; but her owner, who claimed to be the boy's owner by inheritance, threatened to kill her if the will was not destroyed, and he believed that it had been destroyed. That boy was now a middle-aged man, having passed the flower of his years in bondage; and his mother was an old woman, living to thank God that her son was free. The master, a rich man, had as yet no idea of the existence of that will, by which he might be held responsible for the payment of over forty years' wages to his unlawful bondman.

XII

Proceeding from Memphis by steamboat, down the Mississippi, on the afternoon of the third day I sighted Vicksburg, situated on a high bluff, with the sunlight on its hills and roofs and fortifications; golden fair in the enchantment distance lends.

The town was still rude with the scars left by the famous siege. It sloped up rapidly from the landing, on hills cut through by streets, which afforded the inhabitants excellent facilities for burrowing during the investment. The base of

the hills and the yellow, cliff-like banks of the excavated ways appeared completely honeycombed with caves, which still remained, a source of astonishment to the stranger, who could easily fancy them the abodes of a colony of prodigious bank-swallows.

Many of the caves were mere "gopher-holes," as the soldiers called them. Others were quite spacious. The entrance was usually large enough to admit a person stooping slightly; but, within, the roofs of the retreats were hollowed sufficiently to allow a man to stand upright. Each family had its cave.

Not many houses were destroyed by the bombardment. When it was hottest, it was estimated that six thousand shells were thrown into the city by the riverside mortars every twenty-four hours, — stupendous and amazing fireworks, if the cliff-dwellers peeped out of their holes to observe! Grant's siege guns, in the rear of the bluffs, dropped daily four thousand more along the rebel lines. It seemed incredible that so small an amount of damage should have been done by so prodigious and prolonged a cannonade. The soldiers too had their "gopher-holes," and laughed at the howling and exploding projectiles. Of the women and children in the town, only three were killed and twelve injured. The besieged were

cut off from supplies, and both citizens and soldiers suffered more from the scarcity of provisions than from the falling thunderbolts.

Like all the army officers to whom I was accredited, Major-General Wood, in command of the military department of Mississippi, extended to me every possible courtesy and kindness, and gave me letters to other commanders of departments I was still to visit. I passed memorable hours with him at his headquarters, or riding by his side around the fortifications below Vicksburg, inspecting redans and rifle pits, approaches and defences.

One day I joined a small equestrian party of ladies and gentlemen, got up by one of his lieutenants for my benefit, and rode to various points of interest; taking in Fort Hill, in the "crater" of which, after the Confederate bastions had been mined and blown up, occurred one of the most desperate combats that marked the siege; and a little way down the slope, the spot rendered historic by the interview that terminated the long struggle for the key to the Mississippi. There, in full view of the confronting armies, the two commanding generals met under an oak-tree, and had their little talk.

"Where is the tree?" I inquired.

Like the tree near which John Brown's gallows

stood, it had long since disappeared, root and trunk and branch, cut up, broken up, dug up, dissevered and scattered all over the country in the form of relics.

The monument near by, a neat granite shaft raised to commemorate the surrender, seemed likely to have a similar fate. It bore the simple inscription, "Site of Interview between Major-General Grant and Lieutenant-General Pemberton, July 4, 1863;" and it was surrounded by an iron fence. The shaft had been shamefully mutilated, and the fence broken down. I wonder if the obliterated eagle and shield of the escutcheon have been restored, and how much of the monument exists to-day?

XIII

The Quitman, in which I took passage for New Orleans, — one of the finest of the large Mississippi packets, — treated her patrons sumptuously; furnishing, as I remember, an excellent quality of claret as a part of the regular dinner fare, a bottle flanking each plate, after the French fashion, which appeared to have been introduced into Louisiana by the Creoles, and which I supposed was to be found nowhere else in this country, until I met with it afterwards in some part of California.

The river trips gave a delightful variety to my journey; they also afforded abundant opportunities for studying political and social conditions in the characters and conversations of the passengers, and for observing some of the old slave-drivers' methods of working the blacks. The Quitman had sixty deck hands, all colored; and the way they were hustled and hurried and cursed impressed itself on my memory, by the very pity of it. We were nearly all night at Natchez loading cotton; and the next day I noticed that the mate yelled himself unusually hoarse in getting his freight on and off. I took occasion to talk with him about the deck hands. He said, —

"These men are used up. They hain't had no sleep for four days and nights. I 've seen a man go to sleep many a time, standing up, and tumble over, with a box on his shoulder. We pay more wages than almost any other boat, the work is so hard. But we get rid of paying a heap of 'em. When a man gets so used up he can't stand no more, he quits; and he don't dare to ask for wages, for he knows he 'll get none, without he sticks by to the end of the trip."

While we were talking a young fellow came up, looking much exhausted, and told the mate he was sick.

"You ain't sick, neither!" the mate roared at him. "You're lazy. If you won't work, go ashore."

The young fellow limped ashore at the next landing.

"Is he sick, or lazy?" I asked.

"Neither," said the mate. "He's used up. He was as smart a man as we had when he come aboard. The men can't stand it. Not one of these will ship for another trip; they've had enough of it. There's no compellin' 'em. You can't hit a nigger now but these damned Yankee sons of Satan have you up and make you pay for it. I like a nigger in his place, and that's a servant, if there's any truth in the Bible." There was something grimly incongruous in such allusions to Scripture, on lips hot with wrath and wrong.

The levees grew higher and higher as we steamed on, a large and fertile part of Louisiana lying below the level of only moderately high water; we passed bends and bayous, and forests of cypress-trees growing out of the swamps, heavy, sombre, and shaggy with long trailing moss; and on the first day of January, 1866, arrived at the Crescent City.

XIV

It was midwinter; but the mild, sunny weather made me fancy it was the month of May. The gardens of the city were verdant with tropical plants. Roses in full bloom climbed upon trellises or the verandas of houses; oleander-trees, bananas with their broad, drooping leaves six feet long, and Japan plum-trees, bearing plums that would ripen in February, grew side by side in the open air. There were orange-trees whose golden fruit could be plucked from the balconies they half concealed. Magnolias, gray-oaks and live-oaks, some heavily hung with moss that swung in the breeze like waving hair, shaded the yards and streets. And there were vegetable gardens checkered and striped with delicately contrasting beds and rows of lettuce, cabbages, carrots, beets, onions and peas in blossom. I seemed to have entered a midwinter Paradise.

I put up at the St. Charles, famous before the war as a hotel, and during one year of the war as the headquarters of General Butler. He had not left behind him a savory reputation, and I found, to my surprise, that General Banks, who succeeded him in command of the department, was still less respected even by Union men. The rebels had a certain respect for Butler, much as they hated

him; his word could be relied upon; but Banks made ready promises to both sides, and kept faith with neither.

A very different man from these was the sturdy soldier I found in command of the military division of the Southwest, Major-General Phil Sheridan. My letters to him were the first I delivered, and I scarcely needed any others. He went himself to introduce me to Governor Wells, to Mayor Kennedy, and to others whom he thought it would be pleasant or useful for me to know. I found him a man of small stature, somewhat massively built, with exceeding toughness of constitutional fibre, and an alert countenance, alive with energy. I inquired if he experienced no reaction after the long strain upon his mental and bodily powers occasioned by the war.

"Only a pleasant one," he replied. "During my western campaigns, when I was continually in the saddle, I weighed only a hundred and fifteen pounds. But my flesh was hard as iron. Now I weigh a hundred and forty-five."

His conversation was at times so thickly punctuated with emphatic expletives, that he once paused, and confided to me this interesting experience.

"It 's a blanked bad practice, and when I went into the war I was as free from it as a young min-

ister. I never swore until once when I was getting some artillery over the mountains of West Virginia. The mules would n't pull, the drivers were disheartened, all was confusion, everything dragged. At last I exploded; I burst out with a volley that worked a miracle." Then followed a brief account of how the mules jumped, the boys whipped and shouted, the wheels turned almost of themselves, and the guns and caissons went clattering over the crests; reminding me of the old woman's kid that would n't pass the stile, until all at once the mouse began to gnaw the rope, the rope began to hang the butcher, the butcher began to kill the ox, and so on. "But it 's a blanked bad habit," he repeated, "and I don't excuse it in anybody."

He was delightfully frank and familiar; but when I asked if he remembered just what he said to the routed troops, when he met them on his famous ride to Winchester, and turned them back, changing disaster to victory, he merely smiled significantly, without committing himself to anything explicit.

XV

I left New Orleans by rail for Lake Pontchartrain, where just at sunset, one evening, I took the steamer for Mobile. It was a night of tranquil

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beauty on the lake. Strange constellations rose in the southern hemisphere, while others, around the opposite pole, which never set in the latitude of our Northern States, sank below the horizon. I had never seen the North Star so low before.

The next morning we were in the Gulf of Mexico, having entered it by the South Pass. All the forenoon we sailed its lustrous, silken waters, with tumbling porpoises keeping us company, and pelicans flying around us, or sporting and diving in the waves.

From Mobile I ascended the Alabama River to Selma, three hundred miles as the stream twists and winds; proceeding thence to Montgomery, Atlanta, Macon, and on through Middle Georgia, in the track of Sherman's devouring and devastating host. According to a tradition which I found current there, Sherman remarked, while on his grand march through the State, that he had his gloves on as yet, but that he would take them off in South Carolina. Afterwards, in North Carolina, I heard the counterpart of this story. "Boys," said he, "remember we are in the old North State now;" which was equivalent to putting them on again. If the burned gin-houses, cotton-presses, railroad depots, bridges, and freight-houses, which blackened his track in Georgia, showed what he could do with his gloves on, it

was appalling to think what he might have done, with them off, in South Carolina.

I made more than one wide détour, and had often to resort to stage or private conveyance, to get over gaps in the railroads where the tracks had been destroyed, and had not yet been rebuilt. The relaid tracks were very rough; many of the old rails having been imperfectly straightened and put down again.

Sherman's men had all necessary devices for destroying tracks. Said an inhabitant, "They could rip 'em up as fast as they could count. They burnt the ties and fences to heat the iron red; then two men would take a rail and wrap it around a tree or a telegraph post. Our people found some of their iron-benders, and they helped mightily about straightening the rails again. Only the best could be used. The rest the devil could n't straighten!"

Riding beside the destroyed tracks, it was amusing to observe the shapes into which the iron had been twisted. "Hairpins" predominated. "Corkscrews" were also abundant. Sometimes we found four or five rails wound around the trunk of a tree, that would have to be cut before they could be removed. Some would have a twist in the middle, with the ends facing both ways. Sherman must have had at least one glove off in Eastern Georgia.

"A neighbor of mine," said an East Georgian, "buried all his gold and silver and built a hog-pen over the spot. The Yankees mistrusted a certain new look about it, ripped it away, stuck in their bayonets, and found the specie. Another hid his gold under the brick floor of his smokehouse. The rascals smelt out the trick, pulled up the floor, got the gold, and then burnt the smokehouse. My wife did the neatest thing. She took all our valuables, such as watches and silver spoons, and hid them in the cornfield. With a knife she would just make a slit in the ground, open it a little, put in one or two things, and then let the top earth down, just like it was before. The soldiers went all over that field, sticking in their bayonets, but they did n't find a thing. The joke of it was, she came very near not finding some of the things herself."

XVI

From Augusta I hastened on to Savannah, a city of strange, semi-tropic aspect; of which I remember particularly the moist and heavy atmosphere, the night fogs encamping upon it, and the dead level of its sandy streets, shaded by two or four rows of moss-draped trees. More impressive than all else was the marvelous Bonaventure Cemetery, with its avenues of indescribable beauty

and gloom, under long colonnades of huge live-oaks, solemn, still, and hoary, the great limbs meeting overhead, and bough and branch trailing shrouds of long fine moss, that hung in ghostly silence, or waved mysteriously in every sighing wind.

The railroad track running north from Savannah, through a country of rice plantations, had been converted into Sherman's hairpins and corkscrews, and had not yet been rebuilt. But, although I was now turning my face homeward, and should have preferred the wings of a dove with no stops at way stations, I was n't sorry for the chance that took me around to Charleston by sea. There was little travel and less business between the two cities at that time; two or three small steamers sufficing for the entire traffic. Going on board one of these inferior boats one afternoon, at Savannah, I awoke the next morning in Charleston harbor.

A warm, soft, misty morning it was, the pale dawn breaking through rifts in the light clouds overhead, a vapory horizon of dim sea all around. What was that great bulk away on our left, drifting silently past us? It was the thing known as Fort Sumter. But it was fast on its rock; it was we who were drifting. It was historic ground we were traversing — or, rather, historic water. Fort

Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, James Island, — how one's heart stirred with the memories these names called up! What was that lying at anchor? A monitor, with a man on its low flat deck walking almost level with the water. Two noticeable objects followed in our wake. One was a proud-beaked New York steamer; the other, the wonderful light of dawn dancing upon the waves.

Before us all the while, rising and expanding at our approach, its wharves and shipping, its warehouses and church steeples gradually taking shape, as the low peninsula pushed out between its two rivers, was the haughty and defiant little city that inaugurated Secession and kindled the fire it took a nation's blood to quench.

The ruins of Charleston were the most picturesque of all I saw in the South; the gardens and broken walls of many of its finest residences remaining to attest their former elegance. Broad, semicircular flights of marble steps, once conducting to proud doorways, were cracked and calcined slabs, leading up to high foundations, swept of everything but the crushed and blackened fragments of their former superstructures, with here and there a broken pillar, and here and there a windowless wall.

XVII

In Charleston and its vicinity I saw and talked with a great number of people of all conditions, high and low; among others more or less worth meeting, Mr. William Gilmore Simms.

Simms had been a popular author twenty-five years before. In my boyhood I had read his rather sensational Pelayo, and one or two other of his romances, the recollection of which inspired me with curiosity to see the author.

I found him in a printing-office, doing some sort of work on a daily paper; a man of sixty, with shortish iron-gray hair and roughish features, — not at all my idea of a great writer who could harrow up the souls of boy readers. He was quite ready to talk to me, particularly upon one topic, namely, the damage the Yankees had inflicted upon his beloved State and idolized city.

"Charleston, sir," he said, with a level fixity of look, "was the finest city in the world; not a large city, but the finest. South Carolina, sir, was the flower of modern civilization. Our people were the most hospitable, the most accomplished, having the highest degree of culture and the highest sense of honor, of any people, I will not say of America, sir, but of any country on the globe. And they are so still, even in their temporary desolation."

All this I could not gainsay; my intimacy with the world's civilizations not being sufficient to enable me to formulate an argument. When I would have led him to speak of actual incidents and conditions, he launched forth more of these orotund utterances. As they did not convey precisely the sort of information I was in search of, I was unable to adorn my pages with them, and find that I did not mention Mr. W. G. Simms in my volume.

XVIII

Wherever else Sherman may have had his gloves on, he certainly had them off on his way from Charleston to the State Capital; and there he flung them into the fire. What the rebel invaders of Pennsylvania did in a small way at Chambersburg, our army repeated on a scale of appalling magnitude at Columbia.

The city was not destroyed, however, by General Sherman's orders. It is quite probable that the fire was started by flying flakes of the flaming cotton burned by the Confederates themselves in their retreat. Then undoubtedly marauders took a hand in spreading it. Three fifths of the beautiful city went up in roaring flames in one night.

Through Governor Orr, to whom I had letters, I made acquaintance with Mayor Gibbes and other citizens; and to them I was indebted for many

reminiscences and anecdotes. On the night of the fire, a thousand men could be seen, in the yards and gardens of the city, by the light of the flames, probing the earth with their bayonets for buried plunder. The dismay and terror of the inhabitants can hardly be conceived. Trunks and bundles were snatched from the hands of hurrying fugitives, broken open, rifled, and then hurled into the flames. Ornaments were plucked from the necks and arms of ladies and caskets from their hands.

An old gentleman who had purchased two watches for his grandchildren had one snatched from him by a soldier. In his rage and grief he exclaimed, "You may as well take the other!" and his suggestion was cheerfully complied with.

Another sufferer said, "That watch will be good for nothing without the key. Won't you stop and take it?" "Thank you," said the soldier; and he went off proudly winding his new chronometer.

The soldiers were full of humorous remarks about the ruined city. "What curious people you are!" said one. "You run up your chimneys before you build your houses."

One man's treasure, buried by his garden fence, escaped the soldiers' divining rods, but was afterwards discovered by a hitched horse pawing the earth over it. Some treasures were hidden in

COLUMBIA, S. C., AFTER SHERMAN'S RAID

cemeteries, but they did not always escape the search of the soldiers, who showed a strong mistrust of new-made graves.

I talked with some good Columbians who expressed the most violent hatred of the Yankees, for the ruin of their homes. Others took a more philosophical view of the subject. This difference was thus explained to me by Governor Orr's private secretary, a young man (an old man now, if he is still living, as I trust he may be) who had been an officer in the Confederate service.

"People who were not in the war cannot understand or forgive these things. But those who have been in the army know what armies are; they know that, under the same circumstances, they would have done the same things."

And I was reminded of Jeff Davis's famous speech at Stevenson, Ala., in 1861, in which he predicted that grass should grow in the streets of Northern cities that Southern armies were to lay waste with "sword and torch."

XIX

I continued my tour through North Carolina, into Virginia again, and at Richmond completed the circuit, having given four months to my two journeys, and visited ten of the States which had been the principal scenes of the Great Conflict.

I reached home in February, in excellent health, and immediately set about the completion of my record of observations.

I sent the manuscript to the printers as fast as it was written, and had the last pages through the press some time in June. The book — a volume of 590 pages, with maps and steel and wood engravings — had for title: "The South: Its Battle-Fields, Desolated States and Ruined Cities, its People and Prospects." I made the narrative as literally faithful to facts as the most conscientious painstaking would permit. Wherever practicable, I stepped aside and let the people I met speak for themselves. Notes taken on the spot, and in many cases under almost insuperable difficulties, — on horseback, in jolting wagons, by the uncertain firelight of a farmhouse or negro camp, sometimes in the dark and in the rain, — enabled me to do this in many cases with absolute fidelity. Idiomatic peculiarities, often so expressive of character, I was careful to reproduce without exaggeration. It was this almost photographic and stenographic truthfulness which rendered the volume unique among the large number on the same subject appearing about the same time.

While admitting evidence from all classes without prejudice, I reserved the right of the court to render judgment, and expressed my own opinions

pretty liberally in discussing conditions and causes, the results of emancipation and plans of reconstruction, negro suffrage, free labor, the education of the freedmen, and kindred questions. I shall not trouble the present reader with my arguments and conclusions, but dismiss the subject with a single consideration, which I do not remember to have laid stress upon at the time, but which recurs to me now with impressive force, in reviewing those four months' experiences. It is this: that no other country or epoch ever furnished such abundant and rich materials for romantic or realistic fiction, humorous, tragic, pathetic, picturesque, full of great events and of the most amazing contrasts of characters and conditions, as appealed to the heart and imagination in the old slave States, at that period of social upheaval. That the currents, counter-currents, and sombre abysses of that troubled time have floated some bright fiction, must be freely admitted. That they did not burst forth and overflow in tidal waves of power and passion, lifting a great and enduring literature, is the marvel.

The book had a success which it may have owed largely to the Hartford method of selling publications "only by subscription." But while this may have had advantages in insuring for it a circulation, it was not so well adapted to enlarging

the reputation of the writer. The volume had no advertising, and was hardly heard of at all in the ordinary avenues of the book trade. While agents were quietly distributing it in their districts, many readers who knew me through my other writings remained ignorant that I had produced such a work.

As I had the privilege of using in advance six chapters from my book in Ticknor & Fields' two periodicals, I gave to The Atlantic those already mentioned, and printed four articles, — A Visit to Mount Vernon, The Battle-Field of Fredericksburg, Richmond Prisons, and A Tennessee Farm-House, — in the other magazine, of which some account must now be given, as I was already somewhat intimately, and was to be still more intimately, associated with its fortunes.

CHAPTER X

OUR YOUNG FOLKS AND BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG

I

THE war was nearing its close, and an era of assured prosperity for the North was setting in, when Mr. Fields invited my coöperation in establishing a new "illustrated magazine for boys and girls." I at once became interested in it, and, with other friends of Mr. Fields, began to consider the important question of an appropriate and attractive title. Dr. Holmes, who had christened The Atlantic, wittily suggested The Atlantic Lighter; a number of other names were proposed and rejected, Our Young Folks being the one finally chosen. Well-known contributors were enlisted for the early numbers, — Mrs. Stowe, Miss Alcott, Whittier, Higginson, Aldrich, Rose Terry, Miss Phelps, and a long list besides. Among the later writers were Edward Everett Hale and his sister, Lucretia Hale (author of the quaint Peterkin Papers), Bayard Taylor, James Parton, Mrs. Elizabeth Akers-Allen, Celia Thaxter, and Charles Dickens, who contributed a four-part serial story, A Holiday Romance. Lowell and Longfellow also

were represented by poems. The magazine was a financial success from the start.

The first number was that for January, 1865, with the names of J. T. Trowbridge, Gail Hamilton, and Lucy Larcom on the cover, as editors. These were retained until Gail Hamilton's violent rupture with the publishers (who were also publishers of her books) over a question of copyright, which led to her attack upon them — especially upon the member of the firm who had been her personal friend — in her wonderfully witty but woefully unwise Battle of the Books. When it was no longer possible to keep her name, all the names were quietly dropped from the cover, and those of the two other editors appeared only on the title-pages of the yearly volumes. Mr. Howard M. Ticknor was office editor from the first, while I was contributing and (nominally) consulting editor until, after Mr. Ticknor's withdrawal from the firm and Miss Larcom's retirement from the chair in which she temporarily succeeded him, I became manager in 1870.

The firm at that time, under its new name of Fields, Osgood & Co., occupied a spacious store and chambers at 124 Tremont Street, where I had a well-furnished and attractive room up two flights, with windows overlooking the Common. Below mine was the private room of Mr. Fields, then head

of the firm, and editor of The Atlantic. Mr. Howells was his assistant, and soon to be chief, if not practically so already. Adjoining Mr. Fields's room was a large reading-room, in a corner of which Mr. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, conductor of Every Saturday, had his desk. In the position of cashier and book-keeper was an earnest and capable young man, Mr. Edwin D. Mead, who left it in the early seventies to complete in Germany his studies for some sectarian ministry, his chosen profession, which he seems to have outgrown before he entered it, for when he returned from abroad it was to begin a larger life-work in literature and reform. The house had a lunch-room, with a generously served table, at which publishers and editors met, and such contributors and book authors as happened to be about were often welcomed. My habit was to give only my morning hours to office work, and to go home to Arlington at noon; but when I was detained in town, this lunch-table and its goodly company made ample amends for the inconvenience.

II

I contributed to Our Young Folks a great variety of articles in prose and verse; among others, Darius Green and his Flying Machine, which immediately, like The Vagabonds, became a favorite with platform readers and reciters all over the

country. I wrote for it a series of papers on practical subjects, that were afterwards collected in a volume entitled Lawrence's Adventures among the Ice-Cutters, Glass-Makers, Coal-Miners, Iron-Men, and Ship-Builders, giving in the guise of a story carefully studied and accurate accounts of the industries described; in gathering material for which I had gone as far as the iron-mills and coal-mines of Pennsylvania. To avoid making my own name too conspicuous I put the pseudonym Harvey Wilder to a series of articles on natural history, and that of Augustus Holmes to papers on Volcanoes and Geysers, Mountains and Glaciers, What is the Sun? Glimpses of the Moon, and kindred topics. I had the satisfaction of knowing that I made these subjects interesting, and was amused when a critic, in commending this "new writer" (Augustus Holmes), concluded his notice with the remark: "It would be well if more men of science would write in this entertaining style."

For serials we had Mayne Reid's Afloat in the Forest, Kellogg's Good Old Times, Carleton's Winning his Way, Dr. Isaac I. Hayes's Cast Away in the Cold, Mrs. Whitney's We Girls, Mrs. Diaz's William Henry Letters (which, although not in the form of a story, were in their naturalness and humor more diverting than most stories), and, to crown all, T. B. Aldrich's Story of a Bad Boy.

III

I had written short stories for the magazine, but none continued through more than three numbers, when, in the fall of 1870, after I had become managing editor, I consulted the publishers as to whom I should invite to furnish the serial for the ensuing year. It was getting late in the season, and none had as yet been volunteered. One of the firm gave me a droll look and remarked, in the words of Priscilla, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" I asked if he meant it. "I mean it!" he answered decisively.

So I wrote Jack Hazard and his Fortunes, turning aside each month from my other work to furnish the installments, which ran through the twelve numbers of 1871. For a subject I went back to the Erie Canal, the old Ogden homestead, and Spencer's Basin; and took for my chief character a vicious little driver with intent to bring out what good was latent in him, by redeeming him from evil influences and placing him in favorable surroundings. Connected with him in interest was his noble Newfoundland dog, Lion. The old homestead I peopled with the Chatford family, and gave to the neighborhood other fictitious characters, all true to the life I had known there, but none of them portraits. I had great fun in writing the story, a chapter of which I would dash off at

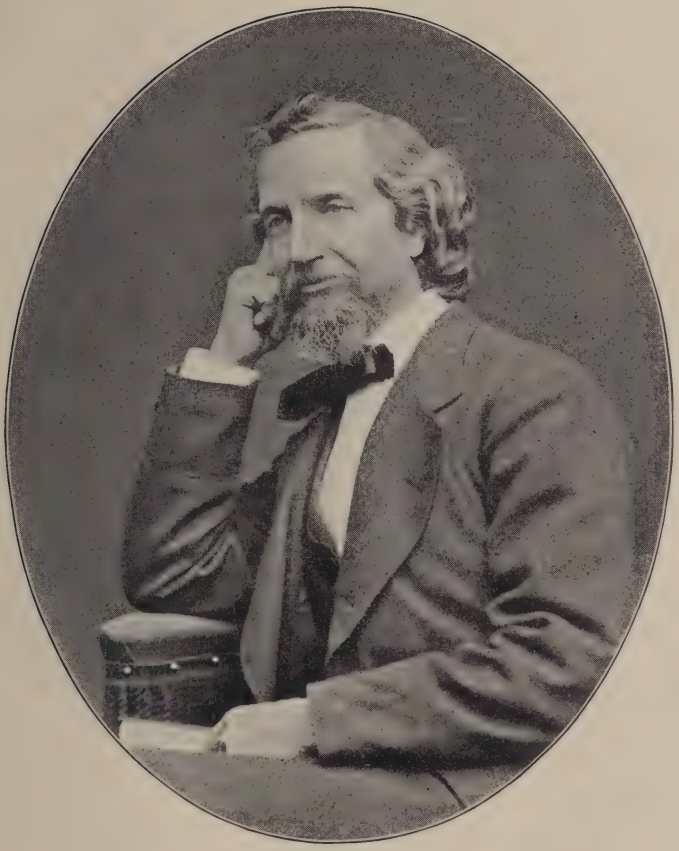
a sitting, in an afternoon, and perhaps send it the next day to the printers, with hardly an erasure. In each mail came letters showing the interest of readers everywhere in Jack and his dog.

The story had been the leading feature eight or nine months, when the same member of the firm who had suggested my undertaking the serial (this was Mr. John S. Clark, now of the Prang Educational Company) said to me, "It won't do to finish Jack's Fortunes in the December number! In completing it for the volume, leave it open for a sequel, which we will announce for next year. That boy and dog are running so well they can't stop for another twelvemonth, sure!"

Accordingly I followed the initial story with A Chance for Himself, and that in turn, for similar reasons, with Doing his Best, the third of the Jack Hazard series. I had already begun a fourth, Fast Friends, the first chapters of which were in type, with a large part of the magazine number for January, 1874, when the proverbial "thunderbolt out of a clear sky" struck the publishing house.

IV

The sky was not so clear as it had seemed to many of us who were enjoying the fancied security of that hospitable roof. Mr. Fields retired from the firm in 1871, and Mr. J. R. Osgood (who, like



J. T. TROWBRIDGE

At the age of 46

Mr. Fields, had risen from the ranks in the business) became head of the house. He was able, honorable, large-hearted, but aggressive and self-confident, and under his leadership the concern assumed enterprises involving hazards which the other's more conservative judgment could hardly have sanctioned. Of these, I remember most about Every Saturday, which began, and ran some time, as a modest reprint of selections from foreign periodicals; but which J. R. Osgood & Co. (the new firm) changed to a large illustrated sheet, designed to rival Harper's Weekly in popular favor. It did not, however, prove a success; and before long financial difficulties necessitated the disposal of The Atlantic Monthly to its present publishers, and the sale of Our Young Folks to Scribner & Co., who merged it in St. Nicholas.

Thus again I experienced the severance of agreeable and advantageous business relations that I had come to consider permanent. With the house established by the elder Ticknor, as with that of Phillips, Sampson & Co., I had esteemed it an honor to be connected; and once more I felt deprived of a home. The "Old Corner Bookstore" (on the corner of Washington and School streets) was old and famous as early as when I first came to Boston. Phillips, Sampson & Co. had Emerson and Prescott leading their list of authors; while

Ticknor & Fields were the publishers of Longfellow and Tennyson, Lowell and Hawthorne, and all that goodly company to whose names Emerson's was also to be added after the downfall of the other house. The acquisition at the same time (1859) of The Atlantic Monthly had been all that was needed to give the Old Corner unrivaled preeminence as representative of the best literature of New England, and of Old England in America. I followed The Atlantic with my contributions, which led to the publication by the firm, not only of my books for the young growing out of Our Young Folks, but also of three other books, of some importance at least to their author, — Coupon Bonds and Other Stories, consisting chiefly of contributions I had made to The Atlantic and Harper's; and two volumes of verse, The Vagabonds and Other Poems, and The Emigrant's Story and Other Poems, also collected from periodicals. The scattering of these volumes was not the least of the casualties I had to deplore, upon the passing of the firm of J. R. Osgood & Co. All, however, went into good hands; and the misfortune that lost me the editorship — to which I had become attached by so many interests that I felt the loss as a personal bereavement — brought with it, as misfortunes so often do, its compensation, in the freedom it gave to form other engagements.

V

Along with Our Young Folks the new serial I had commenced writing for it went over to St. Nicholas, the chapters I had put into type for our January number going into the January number of that magazine. In the same number I published a card, in which, as editor, I took leave of Our Young Folks readers, and bespoke their favor for the new monthly.

I confidently expected to finish Jack's career in Fast Friends, but that story had been running hardly half a year when I was invited to New York for a conference with Mr. Roswell Smith and Mrs. Dodge, regarding a serial for the ensuing year (1875). Mr. Smith was Dr. J. G. Holland's partner in the publication of St. Nicholas and Scribner's Monthly (now The Century). Mrs. Dodge was then, as always after, chief editor of St. Nicholas; and Frank R. Stockton, at that time unknown to fame, was, as I well remember, her office assistant. For a couple of days Mr. Smith, whose guest I was, gave a large part of his leisure to making my visit pleasant; and I came home with a commission to write a fifth Jack Hazard story, The Young Surveyor.

This was the last of the series, Jack having reached manhood, and won the hand of the heroine; but it was not the last of my continued

stories for St. Nicholas. Others of a similar character succeeded, the chief of which were His Own Master, The Tinkham Brothers' Tide-Mill, Toby Trafford (written at Geneva, during my second sojourn abroad), and, passing over several others, Two Biddicut Boys (1897), the latest up to this time; all republished duly in book form.

VI

While I was still connected with Our Young Folks, Mr. Ford (for whom I had previously written a good deal when he was editor of the Watchman and Reflector) asked me for contributions to the Youth's Companion, which he had recently acquired. The Companion had been started early in the century by Nathaniel Willis, father of N. P. Willis, and had held the even tenor of its way as a rather namby-pamby child's paper, until by a curious combination of circumstances Mr. Ford woke up one morning to find himself its sole proprietor. It had then about five thousand subscribers. Being a man of broad business views, he had at first hardly dreamed of doing much with it; but while looking about for an enterprise nearer the level of his ambition, he put some money and a good deal of thought and energy into the little paper. He was reluctant, he once frankly confessed to me, to connect his reputation with "so

small an affair;" and so issued it over the fictitious firm name of "Perry Mason & Co.," by whom it purports to be published to this day. It was for a long time a mystery, even to those who had transactions with the concern, who "Perry Mason & Co." could be. There was then no other "Perry Mason" or "Co." than the quiet little man with the pale forehead and round smooth face, whose plain signature was to become so familiar to me, signed to letters and checks, Daniel S. Ford.

My engagement with Our Young Folks prohibited me from writing for any other periodical, except The Atlantic, to which I remained a pretty constant contributor; but as soon as I was released from that, Mr. Ford again called on me, and I went over to the Companion, writing for it stories long and short, and after a while one serial a year, for many years. From a mere child's paper he was converting it rapidly into a miscellany of the very first class for young people and families. Its circulation increased at a rate that astonished Mr. Ford himself, rising by waves and tides from thousands to hundreds of thousands. Of all this I felt myself a part, and it was a part which he was always magnanimous in recognizing.

He was as liberal with his pay as he was with his praise. Both may have been designed to encourage my contributions; but I think he was as

sincere in the one as he was generous in the other. The pay he increased voluntarily, without any solicitation on my part, often drawing his checks for larger sums than our agreement called for, and making them from time to time larger and larger, until the rate of compensation became, considering the circumstances, munificent. Our personal relations were of the pleasantest. When I handed him a manuscript, he frequently drew his check for it immediately, without reading it; always urging me to write more.

Unfortunately, while the paper was building up, his health was breaking down; he became simultaneously an invalid and a millionaire. I was one of the last contributors whom he continued to see and transact business with personally. At last it became so difficult for him to meet any attachés of the paper except his "heads of departments," as he called them, that I discontinued my visits to him, some time in 1887. The business of the concern had then grown to prodigious proportions. He had as many heads of departments as the President of the United States, and the paper circulated over half a million copies. I once heard Dr. Holmes wittily describe the increase in the number of instructors in the Medical College since his time. "Then," said he, "there were five or six of us. Now there are over seventy.

DANIEL S. FORD

The roast beef of yesterday is the hashed meat of to-day." The change in Mr. Ford's working force, from the time when I began with him to the last year of our intercourse, was even more surprising. He was at first alone in the editorship and business management. Afterwards Mr. Hezekiah Butterworth became editorial assistant. Then one by one others were taken on, until there were anywhere from twelve to twenty on the editorial staff alone. The paper in the mean while adopted the policy of securing for its advertised lists of contributors banner names, which were paid for and paraded at a cost that would have ruined in a single season a periodical of less affluent resources. Even members of the English royal family were induced to become contributors to the paper which Mr. Ford, a few years before, had been unwilling to put his name to as publisher. As he gradually withdrew from its management my own contributions to it became fewer, and ceased almost altogether during my second sojourn in Europe from 1888 to 1891. I could never feel at home in the paper's palatial new quarters, and it could never again be to me what it had been in the era of its earlier marvelous growth, and in the happiest days of the remarkable man who may be said to have created it.

VII

My contributions to the Companion comprised, besides a large number of short stories and other sketches and poems, some of my most successful serials, among these The Silver Medal, The Pocket Rifle, and The Little Master. All the long stories and many of the short ones, like my contributions to Our Young Folks and St. Nicholas, have been reissued in book form.

I also wrote a serial for one sensational paper, a New York weekly. Although I was offered an exceptionally good price for this, I hesitated about accepting it until I had consulted two or three judicious friends, one of them Mr. Longfellow.

"Accept it, by all means!" he said. "Of course you will not write down to the level of such a paper, but try to bring it up to your level. You will have an audience that you would probably reach in no other way." And he added something more as to the good work I would do by showing that literature could be entertaining without being melodramatic.

I furnished the story, which, while not at all sensational, won the approval of the publishers, and which was afterwards included in my sets of books for the young, under the title Bound in Honor.

All this time I continued subject to the "bliss-

ful thralldom of the Muse." In 1877 I published The Book of Gold, comprising, with the title poem, four others of lesser length, all of which had first appeared in Harper's Magazine, illustrated with a view to the volume; A Home Idyl in 1881, and The Lost Earl in 1888, both likewise made up principally of my metrical contributions to periodicals.

In addition to the five books of verse already designated, I will mention Guy Vernon, in a Masque of Poets (1878), of the authorship of which anonymous novelette in verse I now make public acknowledgment.

VIII

My stories, written ostensibly for the young, were intended for older readers as well; and this was doubtless one secret of their success. I was sometimes amused by hearing of a parent carrying home the periodical containing an installment of one of my serials, and hiding it from the younger members of the household until he had enjoyed the first reading of the chapters. This was one of the satisfactions that reconciled me to a kind of work not at all in the direction of my earlier ambition, but which a sort of fatality — perhaps the divinity that shapes our ends — led me to do.

Once when I was trouting in a mountain stream I came to one of those pot-holes that pebbles in whirling eddies occasionally scoop in the solid ledge. It was cask-shaped, with polished, bulging sides, and it was filled with crystal-clear water, in the depths of which were discernible fishes of extraordinary size. They would not rise to a fly, but I let down a bait, saw one of the lusty fellows make for it, and drew out a dace about four or five inches long. Wondering how the large fish had missed the hook and allowed a little brother to take it, I dropped my bait again, once more saw a big one seize it, and once more pulled out a small wriggler. I had to repeat this process several times before my senses were convinced that the large fishes were an illusion, occasioned by a combined refraction and reflection of light in the oval-shaped rocky receptacle. The giants peopling the pot-hole were mere pygmies, one and all.

This has been largely my experience in life. The fish in the pool of anticipation has (with few exceptions) appeared vastly larger than when I caught and took it from the hook. The fame and good fortune I cast my line for, which hope and imagination magnified to such alluring proportions, proved but modest prizes, when landed in the light of common day. Likewise the great

men I have approached have proved to be mortals with the usual limitations, when I have come to regard them at short range. Instead of great epics and works of fiction that all the world would be waiting to acclaim, I have written some minor poems cared for by a few, half a dozen novels, and a large number of smaller books, that have been successful enough in their way.

These last, as I have endeavored to show, were written, not so much from choice, as in answer to an actual immediate demand for what, as it proved, I was well fitted to do, namely, a style of story that should not be bad as literature, and which should interest at the same time young and old. This I have been the more willing to do because the love story, deemed indispensable in most novels, has been so overdone as to become flat and unprofitable except when retouched with exceptional freshness ; and because I was glad of an opportunity to produce a sort of minor novel true to life, with other elements of interest replacing that traditional material. Unquestionably, too, I obeyed a law of my nature in moving on lines of least resistance. In novel-writing I had countless competitors, many vastly abler than myself. In my own peculiar field I was alone.

When I was returning from the World's Fair in 1893, a young woman journalist came down

from Buffalo to Lockport to "interview" me, in my brother's house, for the Illustrated Express. In her three-column article in that paper I was made to say many things differently from the manner in which I did say them, and others that I did not say at all, as is common with "interviewers;" but I find in her report one paragraph which so exactly expressed my mind upon the subject of my boys' stories that I reproduce it here. "Undoubtedly," I said, "they have in a great measure obscured my popularity as a writer of verse. I have naturally felt somewhat aggrieved at this. My best, fullest, and most thoughtful work has been woven into my poems; yet I find myself far more widely known as a story-writer than as a poet. But the fact has its compensations. Wherever I go I am greeted as an old friend by boys, or by men who have read my books as boys, or, better still, I receive the thanks of some mother whose boy she fancies the reading of my books has consoled in times of sickness, or perhaps helped to find, and inspired to keep, the right road. I don't know but that, after all, the most satisfactory monument I could choose would be to live in the hearts and memories of mothers and boys."

CHAPTER XI

RECOLLECTIONS OF EMERSON AND ALCOTT

I

I HAD in my early years several literary passions, more or less ardent and enduring. The first were Scott and Byron, the idols of my boyhood. Then it was Poe, the melody and glamour of whose verse had for me an indescribable fascination. Afterwards came Tennyson, who, with an equal sensitiveness to beauty and the magic of words, opened fountains of thought and of human interest that seemed never to have been unsealed in Poe. Dickens was an early favorite; a little later Thackeray; and I had unbounded admiration for Carlyle. Shelley I never greatly cared for, except in a few lyrics (I could never get through The Witch of Atlas or The Revolt of Islam); — he had fine Æolian chords, but a thin sounding-board; — and Keats was too luxurious a draught to be more than rarely indulged in. At one time I addicted myself to Browning; and Shakespeare I had always with me. Macaulay, Montaigne, Plato, Whitman, — to each of these I gave in turn seasons

of almost exclusive devotion. But of all writers ancient or modern, poets, philosophers, prophets, the one to whom my spiritual indebtedness was first and last the greatest, was Emerson.

II

I heard much of Emerson during my first years in Boston, but through such false echoes that mere prejudice rendered me indifferent to the man and his message. More than to any other source, I owed this misconception to Boston's favorite evening paper, whose versatile and gifted editor — himself a poet, the author of at least one popular song, and of two or three dramas more or less successful — now and again printed extracts from Emerson's writings, with such comments upon them as perverted their meaning and exposed them to ridicule. It was not till long after this that my own experience taught me to distrust such extracts; as when some critic accused me of making the new moon rise in the east, citing from one of my stories a sentence that really seemed to convict me of the blunder he at the same time charged against Coleridge, in the famous lines, —

> "From the sails the dew did drip —
> Till *clomb above the eastern bar*
> *The hornéd moon*, with one bright star
> Within the nether tip."

Just what the Ancient Mariner had in his vivid but somewhat ill-regulated imagination, I will not stop to discuss; but what I described — as the context would have shown — was the "hornéd moon" indeed, rising over the city roofs; not the new moon, however, but the old moon, — not crescent but decrescent, — which the youthful hero of the story, in studying the stars from his scuttle window too long past midnight, saw (as I myself had seen it in just such circumstances) soaring pale and ghost-like in the morning sky. This early moon (which Coleridge undoubtedly had in mind, with the morning star not too literally "within the nether tip") my critic had very likely never observed; just as the talented editor of evening news had never witnessed those splendors of the spiritual dawn which the poet-seer discerned, and which his detractors saw fit to discredit and deride.

With this editor (the same who had previously declined to print my sonnet to Theodore Parker) I became acquainted later, and found him to be not only a person of taste and culture, as his own writings showed, but a fair-minded man, who would not, I am sure, have done any one an intentional wrong. But how great a wrong he had done, not only to Emerson, but still more to me, I became aware, when a happy chance revealed to me the constellations of thought against which he had so long helped to keep my scuttle closed.

It was a passage from Emerson in Griswold's Prose Writers of America which, by its incisiveness of style and singular suggestiveness, startled me as by a new discovery, and sent me hasting to the nearest bookstore for the first volume of the Essays. This must have been in the latter part of 1852; for in my copy of the Second Series I find my name and the date written, "January, 1853;" and I had read, and proclaimed from the housetop of my enthusiasm, and given away, the First Essays, before I procured another copy, along with the Second Series. The First Series I have now in a later edition, 1859; between which and the earlier one I must have possessed and parted with several successive copies, which in those days I had a mania for presenting to friends who had not read Emerson, and to whom I imagined he would bring as welcome a revelation as he had brought to me; choosing always the First Series, comprising Self-Reliance, Spiritual Laws, and Heroism, for that propaganda. It was a fond illusion. I found that those gift copies were seldom read; or, if read at all, that their beauties were but hazily perceived, and their skyey heraldings unheeded.

To the Essays I quickly added the Poems, Representative Men, Nature, and the Addresses, contributions to The Dial, — whatever of Emerson I

could lay my eager hands on. No words of mine are adequate to describe the effect upon me of those extraordinary writings. It was more like the old-time religious conversion or change of heart than anything I had ever before experienced; some such effect as the best Biblical writings might have had, if I could have brought to them as fresh and receptive a mind, undulled by the dreary associations of my Sunday-school going and pew-imprisoned boyhood. They inspired me with self-trust; they reinforced my perceptions, and opened new vistas of ideas, as if some optic glass of highly magnifying and separating power had been added to my hitherto unaided vision. They caused me to make vows to truth, to purity, to poverty, — if poverty should be the penalty of absolute obedience to truth; vows, alas, which had often to be renewed, but never to be disowned or renounced.

III

When I considered by what misrepresentations I had been kept out of that which I felt to be an inestimable birthright, I could not quite forgive their author; and I had afterwards an opportunity of knowing that the injury had touched one more deeply concerned than I. That opportunity came after I had begun to publish my first small books through Phillips, Sampson & Co., who were also

the publishers of Emerson's volumes. They were at the same time issuing a series of English classics, under the supervision of the Boston editor in question.

Entering the bookstore one forenoon, I met the said editor going out; and presently saw Emerson at a shelf examining some books. In the private office I found Mr. Phillips, who received me with a curious smile, and, when I had entered, closed the door. Then he related with quiet glee a circumstance that had just occurred. The editor, seeing Emerson at the book-shelves, had asked Mr. Phillips for an introduction to him. Mr. Phillips said, "I will consult Mr. Emerson;" and going out into the bookroom he proposed the presentation. Emerson bent his brows and responded in his slow, emphatic way, —

"Sargent? Mr. Epes Sargent, of the Evening Transcript?" Then, after a pause: "I have nothing for Mr. Sargent, and Mr. Sargent has nothing for me." Perfectly dispassionate and dignified; but there was nothing more to be said, and Mr. Phillips had to go back to his visitor, and tell him that the desired introduction was declined. I was pleased through and through to learn how my own grievance in the matter had been atoned for, and still more interested to find that even the serene Concord sage was, after all, human, and capable of

a righteous resentment, — if that can indeed be called by so misleading a name which was more likely the feeling he avowed in his letter to Henry Ware, regarding their differences of opinion: "I shall read what you and other good men write, as I have always done, — glad when you speak my thought, and skipping the page that has nothing for me." He simply "skipped" Mr. Sargent.

It may be in place here to state that the conservative editor grew in time to be as radical as Parker, if not as transcendental as Emerson; during the war of emancipation he published an anti-slavery novel, and afterwards wrote books on spiritualism, of which he became an earnest exponent.

That the average editor and man of culture should have found in Emerson many enigmas seems natural enough, and hardly to need an apology, since even the young Cambridge poet, Henry W. Longfellow, could write in a letter to his father, upon the appearance of the first book of Essays, in 1841, that it was "full of sublime prose poetry, magnificent absurdities, and simple truths. It is a striking book, but as it is impossible to see any connection between the ideas, I do not think it would please you." The lack of connection was indisputable; and, if a fault, characteristic. There was nothing of the willow or the

elm, no graceful sweep of foliage or drooping spray, in the mind of the man or in his style of writing. His ideas were like the needles of the pine, each separate, pointed, bristling, in number infinite, crowning the stately stem that was a symbol of himself, as it was his favorite among all the forest trees.

Once on an ocean voyage an accomplished Belgian who was coming to this country asked me about our best writers. I gave him a volume of Emerson, and he undertook the essay on Manners. In a little while he came to me in amazement and disgust, declaring that there was no logical sequence in the thoughts. I said, "That does not trouble me. I see the mountain peaks, and take for granted the invisible range out of which they rise." But for him, without clear logical sequence there was no such thing as style.

IV

At the time of the Sargent episode I had myself never spoken with Emerson, and should have deemed it high presumption on my part to ask to be presented to him. All the more gratifying therefore was the way in which our first interview came about. Entering the publisher's private room one day, I found Mr. Emerson there; and, having said "Good-morning" to Mr. Phillips, I

retired to the bookroom. There Mr. Phillips came to me and said Mr. Emerson would like to meet me. Thrilled with happy surprise, yet doubtful, I said, "I am afraid you suggested it!" "Not at all," he replied. "When you spoke to me in the office, he kept his eyes on you; and after you had gone out, he asked, 'Is that somebody I ought to know?' I told him who you were, and he said, 'I wish to see him!'"

Just when this occurred I cannot now recall, except that it was in the spring of the year; for when, after one of his questions I told him that I lived in Boston, he inquired, "How can you spare the country, this gay spring weather?" I said, "That is something we cannot spare altogether; we must have our Woodnotes, and be free to follow our Forerunners." The moment I had spoken I feared he might regard the allusion to his poems as idle compliment; but it evidently did not displease him. With his "wise, sweet smile," he remarked, "I confess a tender interest in any mention of my poems; I am so seldom reminded that they are ever read by anybody. It is only my prose that gives them a sort of vicarious vitality;" a just statement of the comparative esteem in which his prose and verse were held in those early years of the second half of the century. After some deprecatory words from me, he went on, in

his peculiar, hesitating manner, pausing often as if seeking the right word, then uttering it with an emphasis that relieved it of any suspicion of uncertainty: —

"I feel it a hardship that — with something of a lover's passion for what is to me the most precious thing in life, poetry — I have no gift of fluency in it, only a rude and stammering utterance."

After this I felt there was no longer any danger of appearing a base flatterer; I forgot his fine injunction of forbearance, in the presence of high behavior to refrain from speech, —

"Nobility more nobly to repay;" —

and averred the penetrating thought, often the incomparable note of beauty and sweetness, I found in his verse, citing some lines that at least attested an appreciative familiarity with it. "Here and there a touch; here and there a grain among the husks," he smilingly admitted. To all which I listened with intense interest, having hitherto been barely able to conceive of any limitations, conscious or other, in the master I so much revered; fancying the rudenesses he deplored to be an essential part of his scheme, a relieving background to his beauties; fondly imagining some magic of genius even in his rare grammatical lapses, like

the strange error of construction in these lines, perpetuated, I think, in later editions, — an error which a simple transposition of the words to their natural order will instantly reveal, —

> "There need no vows to bind
> *Whom* not each other seek, but find."

The talk turning upon other topics, I remember particularly what was said of Alcott, one of whose "Conversations" I had lately attended, and found, as I confessed, disappointing. I said, "It was no doubt partly my fault that he was n't inspired; for, as he told us complacently afterwards, 'a wise man among blockheads is the greatest blockhead of all.'"

With an amused smile Emerson replied, "That is Alcott! He is wise, but he cannot always command his wisdom. More than most men, he needs provocation — and the happy moment." When I asked why so great a man had never written anything remarkable, he said, "He makes sad work indeed when he attempts to put his thoughts on paper; as if the jealous Muse forsook him the moment he betakes himself to his pen." I recall also this observation: "He has precious goods on his shelves; but he has no show-window." This was the first time I ever heard the "show-window" metaphor used in this way, and I am inclined to think it originated with Emerson, perhaps on this

occasion. I myself may have aided to popularize it by quoting him.

I had after that opportunities of seeing the more familiar side of the sage; and I remember how scandalized I once was, at a Saturday Club dinner (when I was present as a guest, not as a member), to hear him rallied by the convivial and too irreverent Horatio Woodman for his "neglect of duty" and "want of conscience" in some business of the club. Emerson took the badinage in good part, answering, in a sort of dazed surprise, that he had not understood just what part of the neglected business had been intrusted to him. "You should have known," said Woodman. "Every member of this club is expected to do his duty." I could n't help recalling the incident, a few years later, when Woodman suddenly dropped out, not only from the Saturday Club, but from all business and social circles that knew him so well as a man of affairs and a consorter with literary celebrities; vanishing in a manner that unfortunately gave color to charges of "neglect of duty," and even of the more serious "want," on his part.

At that same table I, for the first and only time, saw Emerson, sitting opposite me, light a cigar, and pull away at it as unconcernedly as the least saintly man at the board. That he should partake

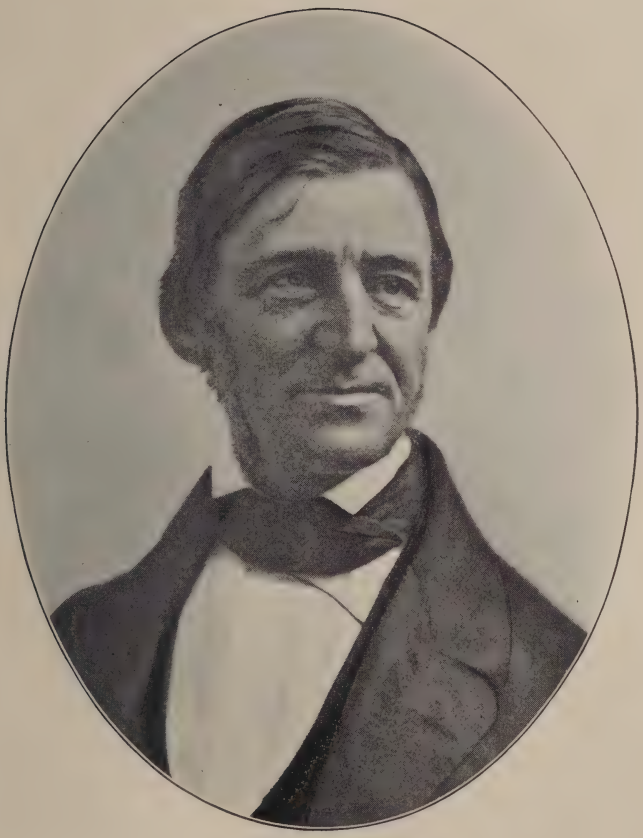
sparingly of wine, I regarded as fitting enough. But to me there appeared something incongruous about the cigar, I hardly know why; for it always seemed right and proper that Holmes, Lowell, and even Longfellow should smoke. I believe, however, that Emerson did not have the tobacco habit. His indulgence (if it was an indulgence) was limited to rare occasions.

V

Emerson's appearance was striking, and his manner not without a certain austere awkwardness, especially noticeable on the lecture platform, where for years I seldom missed an opportunity of hearing him. He was tall and spare, with a marked stoop of the shoulders, a head carried slightly forward, and fine eyes of a peculiar peering, penetrating expression. The strong aquiline nose was the most characteristic feature, but he had ears to match; they were the side wheels to that prow; viewed behind, they stood out from his head like wings borrowed from the feet of Mercury. The head itself was one to baffle phrenology. There seemed to be nothing remarkable about it except its unusual height in the spiritual and moral regions, veneration, firmness, self-esteem. It was otherwise almost commonplace, full in the observing faculties, but

falling away to flatness in what is known as causality; likewise full, however, in ideality and sublimity. His power did not lie in the so-called reasoning faculties; he neither possessed nor overmuch esteemed the gifts of the controversialist and the dialectician. He never argued, he announced; what was reasoning in others was in him a questioning of the perceptions. To all this add temperament, genius, the torrential source of being we name the soul, elusive to the anatomist, and to the fumbling fingers of the phrenologist forever past finding out.

In lecturing he had but one gesture, a downward thrust of his clenched right hand, held contorted and tense at his side, and used with unconscious earnestness in driving his imaginary stakes. He was at times amusingly careless with his manuscript, losing his place and searching for it with stoical indifference to his patiently waiting audience, — "up to my old tricks," as I once heard him say, when he was an unusually long time shuffling the misplaced leaves. He had the same habit that marked his conversation, of seeming often to pause and hesitate before coming down with force upon the important word. His voice was a pure baritone, and a perfect vehicle for his thought, which in great and happy moments imparted to it a quality I never heard in any other



RALPH WALDO EMERSON

human speech. Schools of oratory, teachers of elocution, might have learned a new lesson from those resonant intonations; and I knew at least one professor of the art who studied them with the closest admiring attentiveness. Professor Lewis Monroe, who had himself a voice of extraordinary breadth and mellowness and of highest culture, once said to me, as we walked away together from one of the lectures, "Those tones cannot be taught; they are possible only to him who can fill them with the same energy of spirit; it is the soul that creates that voice." Wendell Phillips had an organ of greater range, on the whole the most effective oratorical instrument I ever heard; it had all the notes of persuasion, sarcasm, invective, impassioned appeal; in its combination of qualities surpassing that of the graceful and finished Everett, the witty and familiar Beecher, the too ponderous Sumner, the almost inspired Kossuth, — even the voice of the great Webster, as I heard it, probably in its decadence, when the worn and weary statesman was lifted to his feet, to make his last speech in Faneuil Hall. Emerson was no orator, like either of these; he had no gift of extemporary utterance, no outburst of improvisation. But in the expression of ethical thought, or in downright moral vehemence, I believed and still believe him un-

equaled. Well I remember how he once thrilled an immense audience in Tremont Temple, in the Kansas Free State war days, in speaking of the principles of the Declaration of Independence, which Rufus Choate had recently brushed rather contemptuously aside as "glittering generalities." Emerson quoted the phrase; then after a moment's pause, hurled at the remotest benches these words, like ringing javelins: "They *do* glitter! they have a *right* to glitter!" with a concentrated power no orator could have surpassed.

VI

The Alcott Conversation to which I have alluded was held one evening, at the house of Mr. Alonzo Newton, in Cambridge; and there were present, besides myself, Mr. and Mrs. Newton and Mr. Lewis Monroe, all eager for new thought and full of the joyous anticipation of listening to so sublime a teacher. I recollect his main stock of ideas, — upon diet (he was a vegetarian, as I had once been for a good twelvemonth); upon temperament, insisting upon the superiority of the light, or angelic, to the dark, or demonic, and instancing himself and Emerson as types of the "highest," Mrs. Newton and myself as "almost the highest," and Mr. Newton and Mr. Monroe as much lower in the scale; then, among other

things, the proper attitude of a wise man uttering his wisdom, — not standing, but seated (he himself always sat). As Monroe had aspirations toward oratory, and usually felt an impulse to rise to his feet when he had anything impressive to say even to a small audience, he ventured a question on that point; to which Alcott answered serenely that such an attitude might be natural to a person of the inferior temperament, but not to one of the purer type. I said I should hardly suppose that temperament had so much to do with it, in Monroe's case, as his habit in teaching; he was accustomed to talking on his feet; I was not, and would never talk on my feet, if I could help it. Alcott said oracularly, "I teach; I sit."

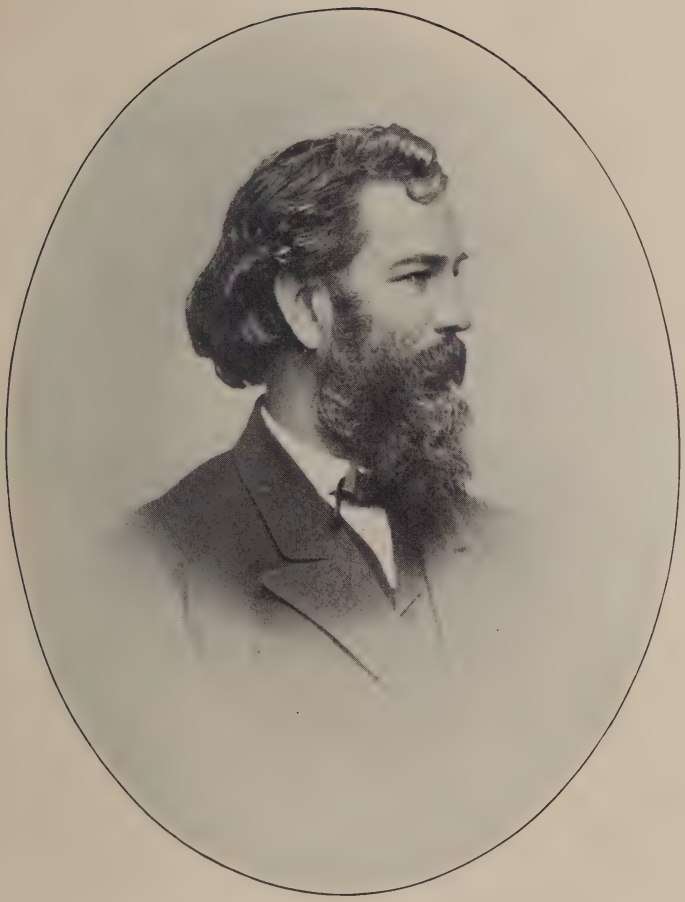
He thereupon took from his pocket a limp-covered book in which were copied or pasted selections that he at times relied upon to help out his Conversations. He first read Emerson's Bacchus (which I knew by heart), and read it badly, in a sort of schoolboy manner, amazing in one who called himself a teacher, and who had in fact been a school-teacher many years of his life. This he followed with The Goblet, the first lines of which were indelibly impressed upon my memory by the twang and unction of his intonations.

"I drank the dregs of every cup,
All institutions I drank up;
But still one cup remains for me,
The sacred cup of Family."

"That is not Emerson's?" I commented, although the poem had lines in Emerson's manner, — I should say now in Emerson's worst manner.

"It is — not — Emerson's," Alcott slowly replied; and as no further comment was forthcoming, he closed the book, in a dead silence. I knew then that the poem was his own, as well as I did when I saw it long afterwards in his Tablets, with emendations, and — what was still more to its advantage — without the singsong. As Monroe was then beginning his great work as a teacher of elocution, which finally developed into the School of Oratory (of Boston University), and as the first principle of his system was absolute naturalness of tone and emphasis, I felt — and indeed a glance at his countenance during the reading assured me — that he had pleasantly recovered from the shock of having his impulse as to attitude condemned by our philosopher as belonging to the lower temperament.

After that, more abstruse subjects were introduced, and Alcott threw out some of his transcendental ideas, not with any coherence or coördination, but rather in hints and tangents. These



LEWIS B. MONROE

At the age of 38

regarded preëxistence, — which he entertained not poetically, like Wordsworth in his Intimations, but more literally even than Plato, from whom his particular views on the subject appeared to have been derived, — with especial reference to the "lapse." By this he meant the lapse from the original state of perfection in which the souls of men were created, and from which they fell before they were born into the world, or there was a world for them to be born into. The creation of the world itself seemed to have been disastrously affected by this lapse. As, according to Spenser, whose familiar line he quoted, —

> "Soule is forme, and doth the bodie make," —

so, according to Alcott, by a supposed law of correspondences more subtle than Swedenborg's, the soul of man made the world, and, because of the said lapse, flawed it with imperfections. Reptiles and other malignant and grotesque creatures were merely man's low thoughts and evil dispositions projected into those concrete forms. It was a new juggling of the old riddle, — if man was created perfect, how could he fall? and, since a sinless deity could not have created sin, how came sin into the world? It was hard to tell whether this curious readaptation of the Calvinistic dogmas of the fall of man and the origin of evil, with its strong

flavor of Neo-Platonism, was to be received as fact or fable; but what I learned subsequently of Alcott's philosophy convinced me that it was seriously meant. Even in those early days, before the publication of The Origin of Species had revolutionized nineteenth-century thought, the best minds were coming gradually to a perception of the truth, — more or less dimly foreshadowed by here and there a writer ancient or modern, — that the methods of nature are evolutionary; that, as Emerson expressed it, in the fine pre-Darwinian lines, —

> "Striving to be man, the worm
> Mounts through all the spires of form."

But Alcott's theory was quite the reverse of this, — that man, instead of ascending through nature, had descended into it from some previous state of existence, and had muddled it. Much of this appeared to me hazy fantasticality. We found him, nevertheless, an interesting man, and well worth our money (his fee for a Conversation was anywhere from five dollars upwards, or whatever his friends chose to give him); although this particular Conversation proved, as I confessed to Emerson, disappointing.

VII

Some time after this I had the pleasure of attending another of these Conversations, which was

held at the house of Dr. William F. Channing, — a son of the great Channing, and a man of scientific attainments, well known at that time as the inventor of Boston's system of electric fire alarm. Alcott should on that occasion have talked well, if ever; for there were present, besides Channing and other persons of culture, Whipple the essayist, and Emerson himself. Even in that atmosphere his genius spread but feeble and ineffectual wings. The Conversation was much more constrained than it had been in the smaller company at Mr. Newton's; and I remember how depressingly it flagged, until Emerson, as if to prompt his friend, perhaps also to give him a hint as to his inert condition and a chance to explain himself out of it, spoke of the intermittence of the divine influx, saying with his customary alternating pause and compensating emphasis, — "What do you think of the — solstice? of the — eclipse? We are not always — in the sun."

Yet with that opening Alcott had only cloudy and commonplace suggestions to make, regarding reaction after effort, periods of rest, and the like; never once soaring into the blue. I could not help recalling, and wishing to quote, the fine sentences Emerson himself had struck out on this theme, in one of his essays, writing of the difference between one hour and another in life; of our

faith coming in moments, our power descending into us we know not whence; and of our being pensioners of this ethereal river whose flowing we neither control nor comprehend. I was able subsequently to recall many things said by others that evening, although nobody talked particularly well; but hardly anything of Alcott's. His part in the Conversation seemed strangely lacking in spontaneity and point. If to me so much less memorable than I had previously found it, at my friend's house in Cambridge, it could not, I am sure, have been altogether owing to my greater susceptibility to the first impression.

VIII

Alcott was tall and well proportioned, with thin white hair worn in long, flowing locks, a pure, pale complexion, placid features, and a rather loose mouth. Placidity appeared to be his normal condition, from which you would have said no conceivable circumstances could rouse him to any display of energy. If an acquaintance met him in the woods, he could be counted upon to do two things, — begin to discourse, and to look about for a log to sit down on. He began life as a Yankee peddler; but that occupation, commonly thought inseparable from shrewdness and an eye for the dollar, did not seem to have developed in

him a sense of the practical value of money, or of pecuniary obligation. He had perfect faith in a Providence that justified the ways and looked out for the welfare of the saints. A friend of mine once saw him on a Nantasket boat, without a ticket, or money to pay for one. When called to account by the fare-taker, he remarked innocently that the trip had attracted him, and that he believed "there would be some provision" — a belief that was immediately vindicated by a passenger recognizing him, and stepping up to make the said "provision." There were times, before his daughter Louisa began to earn money by her facile and popular pen, when the family would have starved but for the generous gifts of Emerson and others, and the energies of Mrs. Alcott, a woman of great worth and good sense, who kept the wolf from the door while her husband dreamed dreams.

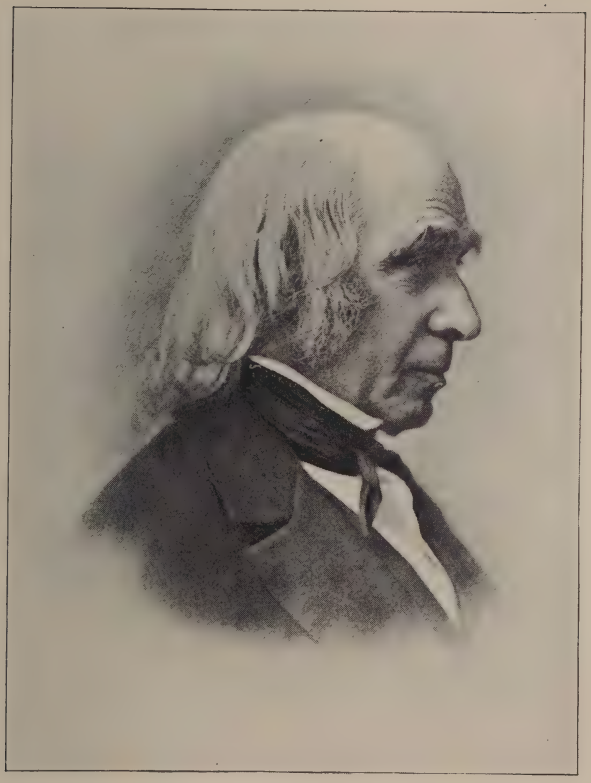
I met him occasionally in those years, and tried hard to accept his own estimate of himself, and to see in him what Emerson saw. His own estimate and what Emerson saw are curiously shown in a passage from Emerson's diary, quoted in Sanborn's Life of Alcott: "I said to him, 'A great man formulates his thought. Who can tell what you exist to say? You at least ought to say what is your thought, what you stand for.' He looked

about a little and answered that he 'had not a lecture or a book, — but if Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Socrates, Behmen, Swedenborg were to meet in this town, he should not be ashamed, but should be free of that company.' It was well said, and I know not whom in this country they would ask for so readily."

I wrote once, in an epigram intended for the eye of a friend: —

> Do you care to meet Alcott? His mind is a mirror,
> Reflecting the unspoken thought of his hearer:
> To the great he is great; to the fool he 's a fool:
> In the world's dreary desert a crystalline pool,
> Where a lion looks in and a lion appears;
> But an ass will see only his own ass's ears.

But he was not always great even to the great. Margaret Fuller, who had unsurpassed opportunities of judging him, having known him intimately for years and been associated with him in his famous Boston school, — of whom he himself wrote (in his diary) that she had "a deeper insight into character than any of her contemporaries," — never found Alcott "great" until on one happy occasion, regarding which she wrote to Emerson, "I am inclined to think he deserves your praise, and that he deceived neither you nor himself in saying I had not yet seen him." This seems, however, to have been an exceptional experience



A. BRONSON ALCOTT

on the part of Miss Fuller. If it took the foremost woman of her day so long to obtain even that glimpse, it is small wonder that to so many who lacked her opportunities the "lion" should have remained unrevealed.

When I found that even his most illustrious friend failed at times to evoke a luminous image from the pool that to my apprehension appeared oftener stagnant than crystalline, I was still bound to credit those who discovered in him a profundity I could never perceive. Yet I have marveled not a little at Emerson's taking so seriously pretensions that must even to him at times have seemed grotesque, as when Alcott once said to him (as cited again in Sanborn's Life of Alcott), "You write of Plato, Pythagoras, Jesus; why do not you write of me?"

CHAPTER XII

WALT WHITMAN — WITH GLIMPSES OF CHASE AND O'CONNOR

I

I FIRST made acquaintance with Whitman's writings when a newspaper notice of the earliest edition of Leaves of Grass reached me, in Paris, in the autumn of 1855. It was the most exhilarating piece of news I had received from America during the six months of my absence abroad. Such vigor, such graphic force, such human sympathy, such scope and audacity in the choice and treatment of themes, found in me an eagerly interested reader of the copious extracts which the notice contained. When I came to see the volume itself, — the thin, small quarto of 1855, — I found in it much that impressed me as formless and needlessly offensive; and these faults were carried to extremes in the second and enlarged edition of 1856. Yet the tremendous original power of this new bard, and the freshness, as of nature itself, which breathed through the best of his songs or sayings, continued to hold their spell over me, and inspired me with

intense curiosity as to the man. But I had no opportunity of meeting him till he came to Boston in the spring of 1860, to put his third edition through the press.

Then, one day, I was stopped on Washington Street by a friend who made this startling announcement: "Walt Whitman is in town; I have just seen him!" When I asked where, he replied: "At the stereotype foundry, just around the corner. Come along! I 'll take you to him." The author of Leaves of Grass had loomed so large in my imagination as to seem almost superhuman; and I was filled with some such feeling of wonder and astonishment as if I had been invited to meet Socrates or King Solomon.

We found a large, gray-haired and gray-bearded, plainly dressed man, reading proof-sheets at a desk in a little dingy office, with a lank, unwholesome-looking lad at his elbow, listlessly watching him. The man was Whitman, and the proofs were those of his new edition. There was a scarcity of chairs, and Whitman, rising to receive us, offered me his; but we all remained standing except the sickly looking lad, who kept his seat until Whitman turned to him and said, "You 'd better go now; I 'll see you this evening." After he had gone out, Whitman explained: "He is a friendless boy I found at my boarding place. I am trying to

cheer him up and strengthen him with my magnetism;" a practical but curiously prosaic illustration of these powerful lines in the early poems: —

"To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door. . . .
I seize the descending man, I raise him with resistless will. . . .
O despairer, here is my neck, hang your whole weight upon me!
I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an armed force, lovers of me, bafflers of graves;
Sleep! they and I keep guard all night,
Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you."

The difference between the prosaic fact and the poetic expression was not greater than the contrast between Whitman as I had imagined him and the simple, well-mannered man who stood and talked with us. From his own descriptions of himself, and from the swing and impetus of his lines, I had pictured him proud, alert, grandiose, defiant of the usages of society; and I found him the quietest of men. I really remember but one thing he said, after sending away the boy. The talk turning on his proof-sheets, I asked how the first poems impressed him, at this re-reading; to which he replied, "I am astonished to find myself capable of feeling so much." The conversation was all very quiet, pitched in a low key, and I went away somewhat disappointed that he did not say or do

something extraordinary and admirable; one of the noticeable things about him being an absence of all effort to make a good impression.

II

I got on vastly better with him when, the next Sunday morning, he came out to see me on Prospect Hill, in Somerville, where I was then living (in the later home of the Newtons).

The weather was perfect, — it was early May; the few friends I introduced to him were congenial spirits; he was happy and animated, and we spent the day together in such hearty and familiar intercourse that when I parted with him in the evening, on East Cambridge bridge, having walked with him thus far on his way back to Boston, I felt that a large, new friendship had shed a glow on my life. Of much of that day's talk I have a vivid recollection, — even of its trivialities. He was not a loud laugher, and rarely made a joke, but he greatly enjoyed the pleasantries of others. He liked especially any allusion, serious or jocular, to his poems. When, at dinner, preparing my dish of salad, I remarked that I was employed as his critics would be when his new edition was out, he queried, "Devouring Leaves of Grass?" "No," I said, "cutting up Leaves of Grass!" — which amused him more, I fancy, than the cutting up

did that came later. As the afternoon waned, and he spoke of leaving us, the vivacious hostess placed a book before the face of the clock. I said "Put Leaves of Grass there. Nobody can see through that." "Not even the author?" he said, with a whimsical lifting of the brows.

Much of the talk was about himself and his poems, in every particular of which I was profoundly interested. He told me of his boyhood in Brooklyn; going to work in a printing office at the age of fourteen; teaching school at seventeen and eighteen; writing stories and sketches for periodicals under his full name, Walter Whitman (his first Leaves of Grass was copyrighted by Walter Whitman, after which he discarded "Walter" for "Walt"); editing newspapers and making political speeches, on the Democratic side; leading an impulsive, irregular sort of life, and absorbing, as probably no other man ever did, the common aspects of the cities he was so proud of, Brooklyn and New York. His friendships were mostly with the common people, — pilots, drivers, mechanics; and his favorite diversions crossing the ferries, riding on the top of omnibuses, and attending operas. He liked to get off alone by the seashore, read Homer and Ossian with the salt air on his cheeks, and shout their winged words to the winds and waves. The book he

knew best was the Bible, the prophetical parts of which stirred in him a vague desire to be the bard or prophet of his own time and country.

Then, at the right moment, he read Emerson.

III

I was extremely interested to know how far the influence of our greatest writer had been felt in the making of a book which, without being at all imitative, was pitched in the very highest key of self-reliance. In his letter to Emerson, printed in the second edition of Leaves of Grass, speaking of "Individuality, that new moral American continent," Whitman had averred: "Those shores you found; I say, you led the States there, — have led me there." And it seemed hardly possible that the first determined attempt to cast into literature a complete man, with all his pride and passions, should have been made by one whose feet were not already firmly planted on "those shores." Then there was the significant fact of his having mailed a copy of his first edition to Emerson.

Whitman talked frankly on the subject, that day on Prospect Hill, and told how he became acquainted with Emerson's writings. He was at work as a carpenter (his father's trade before him) in Brooklyn, building with his own hands and on

his own account small and very plain houses for laboring men; as soon as one was finished and sold, beginning another, — houses of two or three rooms. This was in 1854; he was then thirty-five years old. He lived at home with his mother; going off to his work in the morning and returning at night, carrying his dinner pail like any common laborer. Along with his pail he usually carried a book, between which and his solitary meal he would divide his nooning. Once the book chanced to be a volume of Emerson; and from that time he took with him no other writer. His half-formed purpose, his vague aspirations, all that had lain smouldering so long within him, waiting to be fired, rushed into flame at the touch of those electric words, — the words that burn in the prose-poem Nature, and in the essays on Spiritual Laws, The Over-Soul, Self-Reliance. The sturdy carpenter in his working-day garb, seated on his pile of boards; a poet in that rude disguise, as yet but dimly conscious of his powers; in one hand the sandwich put up for him by his good mother, his other hand holding open the volume that revealed to him his greatness and his destiny, — this is the picture which his simple narrative called up, that Sunday so long ago, and which has never faded from my memory.

He freely admitted that he could never have

written his poems if he had not first "come to himself," and that Emerson helped him to "find himself." I asked him if he thought he would have come to himself without that help. He said, "Yes, but it would have taken longer." And he used this characteristic expression: "I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil."

It was in that summer of 1854, while he was still at work upon his houses, that he began the Leaves of Grass, which he wrote, rewrote, and re-rewrote (to quote again his own words), and afterward set in type with his own hand.

I make this statement thus explicit because a question of profound personal and literary interest is involved, and because it is claimed by some of the later friends of Whitman that he wrote his first Leaves of Grass before he had read Emerson. When they urge his own authority for their contention, I can only reply that he told me distinctly the contrary, when his memory was fresher.

The Emersonian influence is often clearly traceable in Whitman's early poems; seldom in the later. It is in the first line of the very first poem in which he struck the keynote of his defiant chant: "I celebrate myself." And at times Emerson's identical thought reappears with slight change in the Leaves. Two or three instances

out of many will suffice. Emerson wrote: "Suppose you should contradict yourself, what then? With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." Whitman says: —

> "Do I contradict myself?
> Very well, then, I contradict myself,
> I am large, I contain multitudes."

Emerson: "Shall I skulk and dodge and duck, with my unreasonable apologies?" Whitman: —

> "I see that the elementary laws never apologize, . . .
> We have had ducking and deprecating about enough."

Emerson: "The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon." Whitman: —

> "Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow,
> As the waters follow the moon, silently, with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe."

Yet the form Whitman chose for his message was as independent of Emerson's as of all other literary forms whatsoever. Outwardly, his unrhymed and unmeasured lines resemble those of Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy; but in no other way are they akin to those colorless platitudes. To the music of the opera, for which he had a passion, more than to anything else, was due his

emancipation from what he called the "ballad-style" of poetry, by which he meant poetry hampered by rhyme and metre. "But for the opera," he declared, that day on Prospect Hill, "I could never have written Leaves of Grass."

Whitman was at that time a man of striking personal appearance, as indeed he always was: fully six feet tall, and large proportionally; slow of movement, and inclined to walk with a lounging gait, which somebody has likened to an "elephantine roll." He wore his shirt collar open at the throat, exposing his hairy chest, in decidedly unconventional fashion. His necktie was drawn into a loose knot, or hung free, with serpentine ends coiled away somewhere in his clothing. He was scrupulously neat in person, — "never dressed in black, always dressed freely and clean in strong clothes," according to his own description of himself; head massive, complexion florid-tawny, forehead seamed with wrinkles, which, along with his premature grayness, made him look much older than he was. Mr. Howells, in his First Impressions of Literary New York, describes a meeting with him a few months later, that same year (1860), and calls him "the benign old man." Whitman was at that time forty-one.

I did not see him again for three years and a half; meanwhile the Civil War was raging, and

in 1862 he went to the front to nurse his brother, Lieutenant-Colonel George W. Whitman, who had been wounded at Fredericksburg. This was the beginning of his hospital work, which became so important an episode in his life.

IV

In the latter part of November, 1863, a fortunate circumstance placed me in friendly relations with Hon. Salmon P. Chase, and I became a guest in his Washington home. He was then at the summit of his fame and power as Secretary of the Treasury, in which office his eminent ability, his integrity of character, and his immense popularity as the father of the "greenbacks" and the successful manager of the Nation's finances in the crisis of its greatest peril, had made him, next to President Lincoln, the most important personage in the government.

In person, the Secretary was a grand specimen of massively compact manhood, perfectly erect, over six feet tall (six feet one, I think he told me); always decorously dressed, his imposing figure commonly set off by a well-fitting frock coat; features full and strong, complexion light, face smooth-shaven, and eyes light and beaming, with that peculiar fullness of the eyeball that denotes near-sightedness. He was august in the

HON. SALMON P. CHASE

true sense, sometimes austere; and I can understand why some who did not know him under favorable conditions should have thought him cold-hearted. He was surprisingly unreserved in his expressions of opinion regarding public measures and public men, not even sparing the President. His frankness of speech was habitual, and undoubtedly gained him some enemies. I remember two of his political friends coming in, one evening, to present to him a young man who had made himself the hero of the hour by writing a partisan article of a particularly slashing character. The Secretary received him kindly, but instead of praising his performance, said of it simply — "I thought it very indiscreet," — with a smile like a flower above a thorn. The thorn pierced, nevertheless, and I noticed that the young man went away with a diminished admiration of the Secretary.

I saw a great deal of him during my stay, — at his own table, where there were often noted guests, in his private office, and at the Treasury Department; and I was frequently his companion in before-breakfast walks. He was not distinguished for wit, but his conversation, always entertaining, was often embroidered with a playfulness which the background of his stately presence set off. At the breakfast table one morning he read

aloud, with an amusement we all shared, a ridiculous newspaper account of his being locked in his office with his report, which he was then writing, and inaccessible even to President Lincoln.

I said, "They should add that when you go to walk you have a guard."

He glanced at my slender goatee and quoted, —

"'A whiskered pandour and a fierce hussar.'"

He strongly disapproved of the President's habit of telling all sorts of stories, to all sorts of people, on all sorts of occasions; yet he himself sometimes repeated a Lincoln story with good effect. One evening (my note-book says Dec. 1) he came in to dinner after attending a cabinet meeting at which the President submitted to his heads of departments the draft of his message to Congress, and having read it, invited their comments. For some time — he said in relating the incident — nobody spoke. Then he broke the awkward silence by suggesting an amendment; whereupon Seward proposed another.

"Governor," said Lincoln, turning to his Secretary of State, "you remind me of a Blue Grass farmer who had a black man and a fine yoke of oxen. One day the black man came running to the house; — 'Massa', says he, 'dat ar off ox, him dead. T'udder too. T'ought I would n't tell

you bofe tuh oncet, fear you could n't stand 'em ! ' "

Among the noted guests I remember meeting at the Chase house that season were Senator Sherman, Speaker Colfax, Beecher, Greeley, and General Garfield, a frequent and familiar visitor. It was during my stay that the Secretary's accomplished daughter, Kate Chase Sprague, of whom he was exceedingly fond and proud, and her millionaire bridegroom, the youthful Senator from Rhode Island, returned from the famous wedding tour that followed their recent brilliant but ill-starred marriage, and took up their abode beneath the paternal roof.

V

I had at that time few acquaintances in Washington. One of the most prized of these was William Douglas O'Connor. He had turned aside from literature, in which we who knew him in the flower of his youthful promise had believed him destined to excel, and entered a department of the government, — one of those vast mausoleums in which so many talents, small and great, have been buried, and brave ambitions have turned quietly to dust. Chase had himself, in his younger days, sought a humble position in the Treasury ; and it is quite possible that, had he obtained it, nothing

would ever have turned him out of that tomb, except the necessity of making room for some other incumbent, under the hoary old spoils system, to which, with all its evils, we must also accredit the good sometimes resulting from such enforced liberations. In the day of his greatness the Secretary was not averse to being reminded of this possibility, smiling sternly once, as I recall, when a younger person at his table pictured him as a clerk grown gray in the service, meekly receiving his orders, — "Chase, do this!" "Chase, attend to that!" — in the department where, having reached it by other routes, and by the steps of statesmanship, he was then autocrat.

O'Connor's first employment was in the Treasury; in the Treasury, also, when I first knew him, was that other valiant friend of Whitman's, John Burroughs, who, fortunately for himself and his readers, escaped O'Connor's fate. When O'Connor left the Treasury it was to enter the Lighthouse Board, where he became head clerk, and sat like a spider in the midst of his web, a coast light at the end of each invisible line, hundreds or thousands of miles away. In those useful radiations the beams of his genius became too deeply immersed to shine otherwise than fitfully in what I always deemed his proper sphere. Except to take up now and then the championship of some cause

that appealed to his chivalrous nature, like that of Delia Bacon's Shakespearean heresy, or Elizabeth Akers' authorship of Rock me to Sleep, or Whitman and his Leaves of Grass, at a time when the man and his book were in the lowest depths of that opprobrium from which they were so slow to emerge, — but for occasional efforts of this sort, the most eloquent of pens became subdued to the daily routine of office drudgery. He was not learned, in an academic sense, but he was a rapid and omnivorous reader, with an astonishing memory, which when he wrote became an illumined arsenal of literary allusion. It seemed as if such weapons of language and rhetoric as he possessed should have made him our foremost knight of letters, an American Hugo. Perhaps he was conscious of some defect of temperament that unfitted him for such a career. A certain heat and fury seemed necessary to move his mind to creative activity. There was in everything he wrote a tendency to excess, which marred his remarkable novel, Harrington, and in his polemic papers betrayed him into extravagances of over-statement. He and Burroughs were the two earliest and ablest champions of Walt Whitman's work; but their writings on that theme presented the widest possible contrast: Burroughs's Walt Whitman as Poet and Person being calm, unhurried, candid,

judicial; The Good Gray Poet of O'Connor, all aflame with wit and scorn and passionate eloquence.

O'Connor was then in the prime of his powers, strikingly handsome, with a winning graciousness of manner that gave to his gay volubility an indescribable charm. I knew of his intimacy with Whitman, and when one day I found him at his office, and had answered his many questions, telling him where I was domiciled, one of the first I asked in return was, "Where 's Walt?" — the familiar name by which Whitman was known to his friends.

"What a chance!" said O'Connor, in his ardent way. "Walt is here in Washington, living close by you, within a stone's throw of the Secretary's door. Come to my house on Sunday evening, and I will have him there to meet you."

VI

On seeing him again at O'Connor's, I found Whitman but little changed, except that he was more trimly attired, wearing a loosely fitting but quite elegant suit of black, — yes, black at last! He was in the best of spirits; and I remember with what a superb and joyous pace he swung along the street, between O'Connor and me, as we walked home with him, after ten o'clock.

Diagonally opposite to Chase's great house, on the corner of E and 6th streets, stood one of those old wooden buildings which then and for some years afterwards lingered among the new and handsome blocks rising around them, and made the "city of magnificent distances" also a city of astonishing architectural contrasts. In the fine, large mansion, sumptuously furnished, cared for by sleek and silent colored servants, and thronged by distinguished guests, dwelt the great statesman; in the old tenement opposite, in a bare and desolate back room, up three flights of stairs, quite alone, lived the poet. Walt led the way up those dreary stairs, partly in darkness, found the key-hole of a door which he unlocked and opened, scratched a match, and welcomed us to his garret.

Garret it literally was, containing hardly any more furniture than a bed, a cheap pine table, and a little sheet-iron stove in which there was no fire. A window was open, and it was a December night. But Walt, clearing a chair or two of their litter of newspapers, invited us to sit down and stop awhile, with as simple and sweet hospitality as if he had been offering us the luxuries of the great mansion across the square.

Sit down we did (O'Connor on the bed, as I remember), and "drank delight of battle" over books, the principal subjects being Shakespeare

and Walt's own Leaves of Grass. Over Shakespeare it was a sort of triangular combat, — O'Connor maintaining the Baconian theory of the authorship of the plays, and Walt joining with me in attacking that chimera. On the other hand, I agreed with O'Connor in his estimate of Lear and Hamlet and Othello, which Walt belittled, preferring the historical plays, and placing Richard II. foremost; although he thought all the plays preposterously overrated. Of his own poems ("pomes" he called them) he spoke modestly, listening with interest to frank criticisms of them (which he always had from me), and disclaiming the profound hidden meanings O'Connor was inclined to read into some of them. Ordinarily inert and slow of speech, on occasions like this his large and generous nature became suffused with a magnificent glow, which gave one some idea of the heat and momentum that went to the making of his truly great poems; just as his sluggish moods seemed to account for so much of his labored, unleavened work.

O'Connor was a man of unfailing eloquence, whom it was always delightful to listen to, even when the rush of his enthusiasm carried him beyond the bounds of discretion, as it did in the Bacon-Shakespeare business. Whitman's reasoning powers were not remarkable; he did not im-

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press me, then or at any time, as a great intellect; but he was original, intuitive, a seer, and his immense and genial personality gave an interest to everything he said. In my enjoyment of such high discourse, I forgot the cheerless garret, the stove in which there was no fire, the window that remained open (Walt was a "fresh-air fiend"), and my own freezing feet (we all kept on our overcoats). I also forgot that I was a guest at the great house across the quadrangle, and that I was unprovided with a latch key, — a fact of which I was reminded with rather startling unpleasantness, when I left O'Connor at the foot of Walt's stairs, hurried to the Secretary's door, I know not how long after midnight, and found myself locked out. All was still and dark within, except that I could see a light left burning low for me in my own chamber, a tantalizing reminder of the comfort I had exchanged for the bleak, deserted streets. My embarrassment was relieved when I reflected that in those wild war times the Secretary was prepared to receive dispatches at any hour of the night. I rang boldly, as if I had been a messenger bearing tidings of a nation's fate. The vestibule gas was quickly turned up, and a sleepy-looking colored boy let me in.

VII

Two mornings after this I went by appointment to call on Whitman in his garret. "Don't come before ten o'clock," he had warned me; and it was after ten when I mounted his three flights and knocked at the door of his room, — his terrible room, as I termed it in notes taken at the time.

I found him partly dressed, and preparing his own breakfast. There was a fire in the sheet-iron stove, — the open door showed a few coals, — and he was cutting slices of bread from a baker's loaf with his jackknife, getting them ready for toasting. The smallest of tin teakettles simmering on the stove, a bowl and spoon, and a covered tin cup used as a teapot comprised, with the aforesaid useful jackknife, his entire outfit of visible housekeeping utensils. His sugar bowl was a brown paper bag. His butter plate was another piece of brown paper, the same coarse wrapping in which he had brought home his modest lump from the corner grocery. His cupboard was an oblong pine box, set up a few feet from the floor, opening outward, with the bottom against the wall; the two sides, one above the other, made very good shelves.

I toasted his bread for him on the end of a sharpened stick; he buttered the slices with his jackknife, and poured his tea at a corner of the

table cleared for that purpose of its litter of books and newspapers; and while he breakfasted we talked.

His last slice buttered and eaten, he burned his butter plate (showing the advantage of having no dishes to wash), and set his bag of sugar in the cupboard, along with his small parcel of tea; then he brought out from his trunk a package of manuscript poems, which he read to me, and which we discussed, for the next hour.

These were his war pieces, the Drum-Taps, then nearly ready for publication. He read them unaffectedly, with force and feeling, and in a voice of rich but not resonant tones. I was interested not alone in the poems, but also in his own interpretation of the irregular yet often not unrhythmical lines. I did not find in them anything comparable with the greatly moving passages in the earlier Leaves: they were more literary in their tone, showing here and there lapses into the conventional poetic diction, which he had flung off so haughtily in the surge of the early impulse. They contained, however, some fine, effective, patriotic, and pathetic chants; and were, moreover, entirely free from the old offenses against propriety. I hoped to be able to persuade some good Boston house to publish the volume, but found, when I came to make the attempt, that no firm would

undertake it; and it remained in manuscript until 1865, when Whitman issued it at his own expense.[1]

From that morning I saw him almost every day or evening as long as I remained in Washington. He was then engaged in his missionary work, in the hospitals; talking to the sick and wounded soldiers, reading to them, writing letters for them, cheering and comforting them sometimes by merely sitting silent beside their cots, and perhaps soothing a pallid brow with his sympathetic hand.

He took me two or three times to the great Armory Square Hospital, where I observed his methods of work. I was surprised to learn that he never read to the patients any of his own compositions, and that not one of those I talked with knew him for a poet, or for anybody but plain "Mr. Whitman." I cannot help speaking of one poor fellow, who had asked to see me because Whitman had told him I was the author of one of the pieces he liked to hear read, and who talked to me with tears in his eyes of the comfort Whitman's visits had given him. The pathos of the situation was impressed upon me by the cir-

[1] Some time afterwards I had the satisfaction of engaging a Boston bookseller to permit his imprint to be placed upon the title-page of Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*, which was, however, like the Drum-Taps, published at the author's expense.

cumstance that his foot was to be amputated within an hour.

Whitman always carried into the wards a few fruits and delicacies, which he distributed with the approval of the surgeons and nurses. He also circulated, among those who were well enough to read, books and periodicals sent to him for that purpose by friends in the North. Sometimes he gave paper and envelopes and postage stamps, and he was never without some good tobacco, to be dispensed in special cases. He never used tobacco himself, but he had compassion for those who had been deprived of that solace, as he had for all forms of suffering. He wrote Washington letters that winter for the New York Times, the income from which, together with contributions from Northern friends, enabled him to carry on his hospital work.

VIII

Whitman and Chase were the two men I saw most of, at that time, in Washington. That I should know them both familiarly, passing often from the stately residence of the one to the humble lodging of the other, seemed to me a simple and natural thing at the time: great men both, each nobly proportioned in body and stalwart in character, and each invincibly true to his own ideals and purposes: near neighbors, and yet very antipodes

in their widely contrasted lives, — one princely in his position, dispensing an enormous patronage, the slenderest rill of which would have made life green for the other, struggling along the arid ways of an honorable poverty. Both greatly ambitious: Chase devoutly believing it his right, and likewise his destiny, to succeed Lincoln in the presidency; Whitman aspiring to be for all time the poet of democracy and emancipated manhood, — his simple prayer being, "Give me to speak beautiful words; take all the rest!" One a conscientious High Churchman, reverencing tradition, and finding ceremonious worship so helpful and solacing that (as he once said to me earnestly) he would have become a Roman Catholic, if he could have brought himself to accept the Romish dogmas; the other believing in the immanent spirit and an ever-living inspiration, and as free from all forms and doctrines as Abraham alone with Deity in the desert. For the statesman I had a very great admiration and respect; for the poet I felt a powerful attraction, something like a younger brother's love; and I confess a sweet and secret joy in sometimes stealing away from the company of polished and eminent people in the great house, and crossing over to Walt in his garret, or going to meet him at O'Connor's.

I thought no man more than Whitman merited

recognition and assistance from the government, and I once asked him if he would accept a position in one of the departments. He answered frankly that he would. But he believed it improbable that he could get an appointment, although (as he mentioned casually) he had letters of recommendation from Emerson.

There were two of these, and they were especially interesting to me, as I knew something of the disturbed relations existing between the two men, on account of Whitman's indiscreet use of Emerson's famous letter to him, acknowledging the gift copy of the first Leaves of Grass. Whitman not only published that letter without the writer's authority, but printed an extract from it, in conspicuous gold, on the back of his second edition, — "I greet you at the beginning of a great career;" thus making Emerson in some sense an indorser not only of the first poems, but of others he had never seen, and which he would have preferred never to see in print. This was an instance of bad taste, but not of intentional bad faith, on the part of Whitman. Talking of it once, he said, in his grand way: "I supposed the letter was meant to be blazoned; I regarded it as the chart of an emperor." But Emerson had no thought of acting the imperial part toward so adventurous a voyager. I remember hearing him

allude to the incident shortly after that second edition appeared. Speaking of the attention the new poet was attracting, he mentioned an Englishman who had come to this country bringing a letter to Whitman from Monckton Milnes (afterward Lord Houghton). "But," said Emerson, "hearing that Whitman had not used me well in the matter of letters, he did not deliver it." He had afterwards made a strenuous effort to induce Whitman to omit certain objectionable passages from his edition of 1860, and failed. And I knew that the later writings of Whitman interested him less and less. "No more evidence of getting into form," he once remarked, — a singular comment, it may be thought, from one whose own chief defect as a writer seemed to be an imperfect mastery of form.

With these things in mind, I read eagerly the two letters from Emerson recommending Whitman for a government appointment. One was addressed to Senator Sumner; the other, I was surprised and pleased to find, to Secretary Chase. I had but a slight acquaintance with Sumner, and the letter to him I handed back. The one written to Chase I wished to retain, in order to deliver it to the Secretary with my own hands, and with such furthering words as I could summon in so good a cause. Whitman expressed small hope in the

venture, and stipulated that in case of the failure he anticipated, I should bring back the letter.

As we left the breakfast table, the next morning, I followed the Secretary into his private office, where, after some pleasant talk, I remarked that I was about to overstep a rule I had laid down for myself on entering his house. He said, "What rule?" I replied, "Never to repay your hospitality by asking of you any official favor." He said I need n't have thought it necessary to make that rule, for he was always glad to do for his friends such things as he was constantly called upon to do for strangers. Then I laid before him the Whitman business. He was evidently impressed by Emerson's letter, and he listened with interest to what I had to say of the man and his patriotic work. But he was troubled. "I am placed," he said, "in a very embarrassing position. It would give me great pleasure to grant this request, out of my regard for Mr. Emerson;" and he was gracious enough to extend the courtesy of this "regard" to me, also. But then he went on to speak of Leaves of Grass as a book that had made the author notorious; and I found that he judged it, as all but a very few persons then did, not independently, on its own merits, but by conventional standards of taste and propriety. He had understood that the writer was a rowdy, —

"one of the roughs," — according to his descriptions of himself.

I said, "He is as quiet a gentleman in his manners and conversation as any guest who enters your door."

He replied: "I am bound to believe what you say; but his writings have given him a bad repute, and I should not know what sort of a place to give to such a man," — with more to the same purpose.

I respected his decision, much as I regretted it; and, persuaded that nothing I could urge would induce him to change it, I said I would relieve him of all embarrassment in the business by withdrawing the letter. He glanced again at the signature, hesitated, and made this surprising response, —

"I have nothing of Emerson's in his handwriting, and I shall be glad to keep this."

I thought it hardly fair, but as the letter was addressed to him, and had passed into his hands, I could n't well reclaim it against his wishes.

Whitman seemed really to have formed some hopes of the success of my mission, after I had undertaken it, as he showed when I went to give him an account of my interview with the Secretary. He took the disappointment philosophically, but indulged in some sardonic remarks about Chase and his department, regarding which some choice scandals were then afloat. "He is right,"

he said, "in preserving his saints from contamination by a man like me!" But I stood up for the Secretary, as, with the Secretary, I had stood up for Whitman. Those very scandals had no doubt rendered him cautious in making appointments. And could any one be blamed for taking the writer of Leaves of Grass at his word when, in his defiance of conventionality, he had described himself as "rowdyish," "disorderly," and worse? "'I cock my hat as I please, indoors and out,'" I quoted. Walt laughed, and said, "I don't blame him; it 's about what I expected." He asked for the letter, and showed his amused disgust when I explained how it had been pocketed by the Secretary.[1]

[1] A brief memorandum of this interview, which Whitman made in his diary, with characteristic carelessness in the formation of sentences, appears, in facsimile of his handwriting, in a book by Thomas Donaldson, Walt Whitman the Man. The book I have never seen; but a friend sends me a printed copy of the memorandum. It is dated Dec. 11, and is as follows:

"This forenoon Mr. Trowbridge has been with me, — he had a talk yesterday with S. P. Chase, the secretary of the treasury, about me; presented Emerson's letter to Mr. C. — he said some commonplaces about wishing to oblige R. W. E. & Mr. Trowbridge; — then said he considered Leaves of Grass a very bad book, & he did not know how he could possibly bring its author into the government service, especially if he put him in contact with gentlemen employed in the bureaus, — did not think he would be warranted in doing so, — he considered the author of Leaves of Grass in the light of a decidedly disreputable person.

I should probably have had no difficulty in securing the appointment if I had withheld Emerson's letter, and called my friend simply Mr. Whitman, or Mr. Walter Whitman, without mentioning Leaves of Grass. But I felt that the Secretary, if he was to appoint him, should know just whom he was appointing; and Whitman was the last person in the world to shirk the responsibility of having written an audacious book.

Whether the same candor was used in procuring for him a clerkship in the Interior Department, to which he was appointed later, I do not know. He had been for some time performing the duties of that position, without exciting any other comment than that he performed them well, when a new Secretary (James Harlan), coming in under Johnson, and discovering that the grave and silent man at a certain desk was the author of a reprehensible book, dismissed him unceremoniously.

IX

It was this incident that called out from O'Connor his brilliant monograph, The Good Gray Poet, in which Whitman was so eloquently vindicated, and the Secretary received so terrible a scourging.

Mr. T. mentioned to him my employment for a year past among the wounded and sick soldiers, — it did not seem to make any difference."

WALT WHITMAN

At the age of 55

What seemed for a time unmitigated ill fortune proved to be a very good thing for Whitman. He was soon after appointed to a better place in the office of the Attorney-General, and he himself used to say that it was O'Connor's defense that turned the tide in his favor; meaning the tide of criticism and public opinion, which had until then set so tremendously against him. O'Connor's pamphlet was followed, two years later (1867), by John Burroughs's Walt Whitman as Poet and Person. Countless other publications on the same inexhaustible theme have appeared since, — reviews, biographies, personal recollections, studies of Walt Whitman; a recent Study by Burroughs himself; volumes of eulogy and exegesis, commentary and controversy, wise and foolish; a whole library of Whitman literature, in English, French, German, and other languages. There are Walt Whitman Societies and Fellowships, and at least one periodical is devoted largely to Whitmanana.

I saw Whitman many times in Washington, after that memorable season of 1863; again when he came to Boston to deliver his lecture on Lincoln; and lastly in his Camden home, where the feet of many pilgrims mounted the steps that led to his door, and where an infirm but serene old age closed the "great career" Emerson had been the first to acclaim.

All this time I have watched with deep interest the growth of his influence and the change in public opinion regarding him. To me, now almost the sole survivor among his earliest friends and adherents, wonderful indeed seems that change since the first thin quarto edition of the Leaves appeared, in 1855. If noticed at all by the critics, it was, with rare exceptions, to be ridiculed and reviled; and Emerson himself suffered abuse for pronouncing it "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom America had yet contributed." Even so accomplished a man of letters as James Russell Lowell saw in it nothing but commonplace tricked out with eccentricity. I remember walking with him once in Cambridge, when he pointed out a doorway sign, "Groceries," with the letters set zigzag, to produce a bizarre effect. "That," said he, "is Walt Whitman, — with very common goods inside." It was not until his writings became less prophetical, and more consciously literary in their aim, that Lowell and scholars of his class began to see something besides oddity in Whitman, and his popularity widened.

X

That such a change took place in his writings Whitman himself was aware. Once when I confessed to him that nothing in the later poems

moved me like some of the great passages in the earlier editions, he replied: "I am not surprised. I do not suppose I shall ever again have the afflatus I had in writing the first Leaves of Grass." One evening he was reading to O'Connor and me some manuscript pieces, inviting our comments, when he came to the line, —

"No poem proud I, chanting, bring to thee."

"Why do you say 'poem proud'?" I asked. "You never would have said that in the first Leaves of Grass."

"What would I have said?" he inquired.

"'I bring to you no proud poem,'" I replied.

O'Connor cried out, in his vehement way, "That 's so, Walt, — that 's so!"

"I think you are right," Walt admitted, and he read over the line, which I looked to see changed when the poem came to be printed; but it appeared without alteration. It occurs in Lo, Victress on the Peaks, an address to Liberty, for which word he uses the Spanish "Libertad" — another thing with which I found fault, and which I hoped to see changed. I will say here that I do not believe Whitman ever changed a line or a word to please anybody. In answer to criticism, he would at times maintain his point; at others, he would answer, in his tolerant, candid way, "I guess you

are right," or, "I rather think it is so;" but even when apparently convinced, he would stand by his faults. His use of words and phrases from foreign languages, which he began in his 1856 edition, and which became a positive offense in that of 1860, he continued in the face of all remonstrance, and would not even correct errors into which his ignorance of those languages had betrayed him. In one of his most ambitious poems, Chanting the Square Deific, he translates our good English "Holy Spirit" into "Santa Spirita," meant for Italian; but in that language the word for "spirit" is masculine, and the form should have been "Spirito Santo," with the adjective correspondingly masculine. William Rossetti, who edited a volume of selections from Leaves of Grass for the British public, pointed this out in a letter to Whitman, who, in talking of it with me, acknowledged the blunder; yet through some perversity he allowed it to pass on into subsequent editions.

In these editions Whitman showed that he was not averse to making changes; he was always rearranging the contents, mixing up the early with the later poems, and altering titles, to the confusion of the faithful. Now and then he would interject into some familiar passage of the old pieces a phrase or a line in his later manner, strangely

discordant to an ear of any discrimination. A good example is this, where to the original lines, —

"My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come, on perfect terms," —

he adds this third line, —

"The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine, will be there," —

a tawdry patch on the strong original homespun. The French "rendezvous" in the first line is legitimate, having been adopted into our language because it expresses something for which we have no other single word, and Whitman would be a benefactor had he enriched our vernacular in that way. But "camerado" — of which he seems to have become very fond, using it wherever he had a chance — is neither French (camarade) nor Spanish (camarada), nor Portuguese, nor Italian, nor anything else, to my mind, but a malformed substitute for our good and sufficient word "comrade." "Lover true," like "poem proud," is of a piece with those "stock poetical touches" which he used to say he had great trouble in leaving out of his first Leaves, but which here, as in other places, he went back and deliberately wrote into them.

For another set of changes to which I objected he was able to give a reason, though a poor one.

In the Poem of Faces, "the old face of the mother of many children" has this beautiful setting: —

"Lulled and late is the smoke of the Sabbath morning,
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,
It hangs thin by the sassafras, the wild cherry, and the cat-brier under them."

"Smoke of the Sabbath morning" he altered, after the first two editions, to "smoke of the First Day morning." In like manner, elsewhere, "the field-sprouts of April and May" was changed to "the field-sprouts of Fourth Month and Fifth Month;" "the short last daylight of December" to "the short last daylight of Twelfth Month," and so on, — all our good old pagan names for the months and days, wherever they occurred in the original Leaves, being reduced to numbers, in plain Quaker fashion, or got rid of in some other way. "I mind how we lay in June" became "I mind how we once lay;" and

"The exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in May" —

a most exquisite and most delicate line, it may be observed in passing — was made to read, not "new moon in Fifth Month" (that would have been a little too bad), but "new moon in spring." I thought all of these alterations unfortunate, except possibly the last; nearly all involving a sacrifice of euphony or of atmosphere in the lines. When

I remonstrated against what seemed an affectation, he told me that he was brought up among Quakers; but I considered that too narrow a ground for the throwing out of words in common use among all English-speaking peoples except a single sect. To my mind, it was another proof that in matters of taste and judgment he was extremely fallible, and capable of doing unwise and wayward things for the sake of a theory or of a caprice.

In one important particular he changed, if not his theory, at least his practice. After the edition of 1860 he became reserved upon the one subject tabooed in polite society, the free treatment of which he had declared essential to his scheme of exhibiting in his poems humanity entire and undraped. For just six years, from 1855 to 1860 only, he illustrated that theory with arrogant defiance; then no further exemplifications of it appeared in all his prose and verse for more than thirty years, or as long as he continued to write. It was a sudden and significant change, which was, however, covered from observation in the reshuffling of the Leaves. In thus reëditing the earlier poems, he quietly dropped out a few of the most startling lines, and would, I believe, have canceled many more, but his pride was adamant to anything that seemed a concession.

XI

No doubt Whitman suffered some impairment of his mental faculties in the long years of his invalidism. He is said to have gone over to the Bacon side of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, and even to have accepted the Donnelly cipher. How confused his memory became on one subject of paramount interest is evinced by a passage in his Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads, where he says of the beginnings of Leaves of Grass that, although he had "made a start before," all might have come to naught — "almost positively would have come to naught" — but for the stimulus he received from the "sights and scenes" of the secession war. To make this more emphatic, he adds the astounding assertion, "Without those three or four years [1862 to 1865], and the experiences they gave, Leaves of Grass would not now be existing." Whereas he had only to look at his title-pages to see that not his first, nor his second, but his *third* edition, comprising the larger and by far the most important part of his poetic work, was published in 1860, months before the first gun of the war was fired or a single State had seceded. After this, we need not wonder that he forgot he had read Emerson before writing his first Leaves.

When Whitman's genius flows, his unhampered lines suit his purpose as no other form of verse could do. The thought is sometimes elusive, hiding in metaphor and suggestion, but the language is direct, idiomatic, swift, its torrent force and copiousness justifying his disregard of rhyme and metre; indeed, it has often a wild, swinging rhythm of its own. But when no longer impelled by the stress of meaning and emotion, it becomes strained and flavorless, and, at its worst, involved, parenthetical, enfeebled by weak inversions.

There are the same disturbing inequalities in his prose as in his verse. The preface to his first edition exhibits the masterful characteristics of his great poems; indeed, much of that preface made very good Leaves, when he afterwards rewrote it in lines and printed it as poetry. At its worst, his prose is lax and slovenly, or it takes on ruggedness to simulate strength, and jars and jolts like a farm wagon on stony roads. Some of his published letters are slipshod in their composition, and in their disregard of capitalization and punctuation, almost to the verge of illiteracy. Had William Shakespeare left any authentic writings as empty of thought and imagination, and void of literary value, as some of the Calamus letters, they would have afforded a better argument than any we now have against his authorship of

the plays. Perhaps some future tilter at windmills will attempt to prove that the man we know as Walt Whitman was an uncultured impostor, who had obtained possession of a mass of powerful but fragmentary writings by some unknown man of genius, which he exploited, pieced together, and mixed up with compositions of his own.

But after all deductions it remains to be unequivocally affirmed that Whitman stands as a great original force in our literature. Art, as exemplified by such poets as Longfellow and Tennyson, he has little or none; but in the free play of his power he produces the effect of an art beyond art. His words are often steeped in the very sentiment of the themes they touch, and suggest more than they express. He has largeness of view, an all-including optimism, boundless love and faith. To sum all in a sentence, I should say that his main purpose was to bring into his poems Nature, with unflinching realism, — especially Nature's divine masterpiece, Man; and to demonstrate that everything in Nature and in Man, all that he is, feels, and observes, is worthy of celebration by the poet; not in the old, selective, artificial poetic forms, but with a freedom of method commensurate with Nature's own amplitude and unconstraint. It was a grand conception,

an intrepid revolt against the established canons of taste and art, a challenge and a menace to the greatest and most venerated names. That the attempt was not so foolhardy as at first appeared, and that it has not been altogether a failure, the growing interest in the man and his work sufficiently attests; and who can say how greatly it might not have succeeded, if adequate judgment had reinforced his genius, and if his inspiration had continued as long as he continued to write?

CHAPTER XIII

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

I

I MADE acquaintance with Oliver Wendell Holmes soon after the Atlantic Monthly was started, and from that time was often in the way of meeting him at receptions, banquets, and on more private occasions. One of the first talks I ever had with him was at some gathering, I have forgotten what, when, allusion being made to the grammatical inaccuracies of famous writers, I instanced the opening lines of The Prisoner of Chillon, —

> "My hair is gray, but not with years,
> Nor grew it white
> In a single night,
> As men's *have* grown from sudden fears;" —

and also Byron's "There let him *lay!*" which occurs in the famous address to the ocean, in Childe Harold. The Autocrat remarked, in his quick, nervous way, "Suppose Trowbridge or Holmes had made those blunders! would n't the critics have had a war dance?" As he had

already achieved a dazzling reputation, while I had none to speak of, this coupling of our names together was to me, I confess, flatteringly pleasant.

Another colloquy I recall that began less auspiciously. It was at an Atlantic dinner, where, a seat beside me becoming vacant, he came and occupied it. He betrayed not a little irritation as he began, —

"I 've a nut to crack with you! The critic of the" — no matter what publication — "says you can write better than I can. What do you think of that?"

I tried to parry the question with an allusion I thought would please him. "That must be when you are not writing 'as funny as you can,' doctor." But he shook his head, and insisted: what did I really think of it? Such a comparison being too absurd to be taken seriously, I replied, —

"That 's a critic after my own heart! If only all were as astute! But here 's a scribbler in the" — I named the print — "who says Edmund Kirke can write better than I can. So what am I to think?"

Thereupon the cloud turned its silver lining. He laughed and said: "If you can write better than I, and Kirke can write better than you, then Kirke is the man! We know where we are!"

At table he was unflaggingly vivacious, ready at repartee, as witty as Lowell without Lowell's audacity at punning (they called each other "Wendell" and "James," talking perhaps from one end of the table to the other), and, for the immediate moment, as wise as Emerson. Underwood, in his monograph on Lowell, The Poet and the Man, has by some lapse of memory misquoted a passage of words that took place between Emerson and Holmes at one of the early Atlantic dinners. The conversation was upon the orders of architecture; it was Emerson, not Holmes, who had been saying that the Egyptian was characterized by breadth of base, the Grecian by the adequate support, and the Gothic by its skyward soaring. Then it was Holmes, not Emerson, who flashed out instantly, "One is for death, one is for life, and one is for immortality." I did not hear this, but it was repeated to me at the time by one who did.

At another of the Atlantic dinners, Holmes surpassed even himself in the sparkle and flow of his Autocratic dissertations. Hardly any one suspected that he had in his napkin the proofs of his next Autocrat paper, procured for him by one of the publishers of the magazine, who was present, and who afterwards imparted to me the secret.

Many anecdotes illustrative of the doctor's wit

were current in those years. I will cite but one. When the friends of the rival claimants of the discovery of anæsthesia were proposing monuments for each, Holmes suggested that all should unite in erecting a single memorial, with a central group symbolizing painless surgery, a statue of Jackson on one side, a statue of Morton on the other, and the inscription beneath: "To E(i)ther."

II

I never heard Holmes converse when he did not converse well; and once at least I had the satisfaction of contributing in some degree to his flow of spirits. Underwood, inviting me to a supper at which the doctor was to be the guest of honor, begged that I would come prepared to make a little speech, or to read something appropriate to the occasion. As speech-making was always irksome to me, I scribbled some lines heartily appreciative of the Autocrat, which I carried with me, and read, at a call from Underwood, in a lull of the conversation. The next day I received a letter from our host, in which he wrote: "It is to you, more than any one else, that the success of last evening is due. Your poem was not only a pleasure in itself, but it wrought a great change in the guest, and brought forth all his brilliant powers. I never heard him talk so well."

With one of the kindest hearts, open to friends, and often sympathizingly helpful to strangers, he yet cherished a sort of Brahminical exclusiveness; something in the earlier Autocrat papers even made you feel that he was at times too complacently conscious of a superior caste and culture. The tone of his writings softened and his nature grew ever more kindly with years. The Poet at the Breakfast-Table was considered less successful than its predecessors, the Autocrat and the Professor; but there was noticeable in the later writings an increased mellowness of flavor that compensated for any supposed falling off in the wit. While they were running in The Atlantic Monthly, I read them always eagerly in advance sheets, begged or borrowed from the editorial room (then immediately under that of Our Young Folks, in the building on Tremont Street), neglecting all other occupations for that instant indulgence. Very likely this was one of a happy combination of circumstances that caused me to see in them what I might look for in vain to-day; our early enthusiasms are so apt to pale in the light of later experiences and changed conditions. Re-reading those papers now, thirty years and more afterwards, would no doubt cause me to wonder a little at that particular enthusiasm; but I am glad I had it, since it moved me to express, in a letter to the

doctor, my appreciation of the genial quality that breathed in the new series, "bathing all in the softest Indian Summer air." The recognition was probably all the more welcome to him on account of the disparaging criticisms the monthly numbers were provoking from the press in many quarters. He wrote in reply (under date of May 12, 1872): "I was just sitting down to write when I received your letter, which gave me such singular pleasure that I must tell you how much happier I was made by it. Perhaps I wanted a pleasant word to give me heart for what I was doing; at any rate I felt really refreshed by your kind expressions, and very grateful. . . . A few lines of sympathy from one, the value of whose esteem we know, go a great way towards repaying an author for his cares and labors. You may be sure that you obeyed a very healthy impulse when you sent me a note which I shall keep among the treasures of my correspondence."

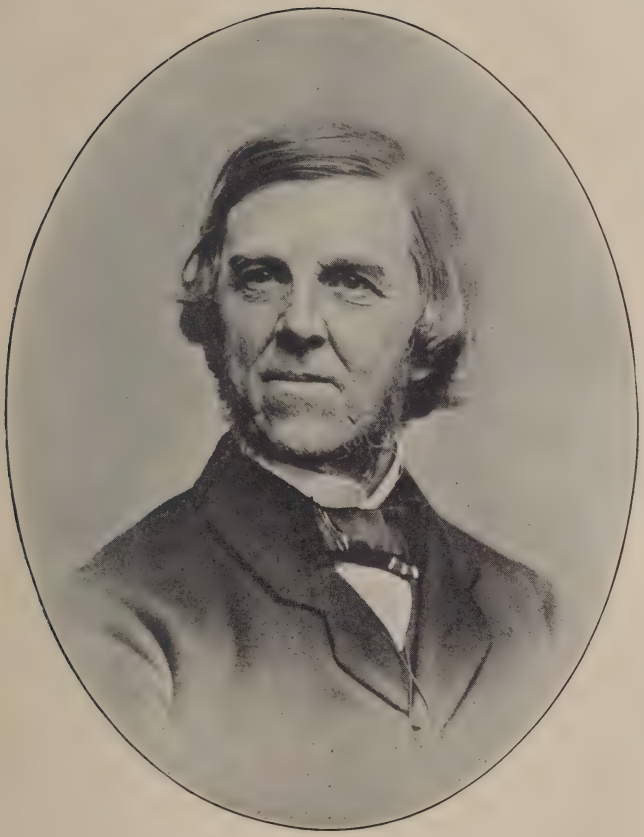
He was frankly fond of praise, and although few men of letters ever breathed that incense more frequently or with fuller breath, he never lost his amiable and sincere enjoyment of it. He once told me of a letter he had received from an ardent lady admirer, and well I recall the gusto with which he exclaimed, "It is gushing! and I like it!" What he relished with such zest he in

turn generously bestowed, and I have letters of his regarding some things of mine that had interested and pleased him — beautifully written letters, their neat and graceful chirography now faded by time — which I "keep among the treasures of my correspondence," to quote words that have so much deeper a significance in my case than they could have had in his own.

III

The doctor's small, upright, animated figure seemed possessed of inexhaustible vitality, but in his advancing years his public appearances became a severe drain upon it, and he felt the need of husbanding it for special efforts, as he confided to me on more than one occasion. We were both engaged to deliver poems at the great Moore Festival, given in Boston in May, 1879, in celebration of the Irish poet's centennial birthday; and I retain a very vivid recollection of the Autocrat's dismay when we learned that the guests had been brought together an hour before the banquet was to take place! After talking for twenty minutes or so to those who crowded around him, eager to catch a word from his lips, he whispered to me despairingly, "Help me out of this; don't let anybody follow!"

I said in alarm, "You are not going away!"



OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

"For half an hour," he replied. "I am going to get into a horse-car and ride up and down until the real, honest hour for the dinner arrives. I must save my voice for my poem."

He returned in time to go in fresh and smiling to the dinner on the arm of that gifted young Irish revolutionist and adventurer, journalist and poet, John Boyle O'Reilly, while I followed with General Patrick A. Collins (now Mayor of Boston) for an escort. These two noted Irish-Americans were among the foremost promoters of the festival, but not, I think, responsible for the too early assembling of the guests; and I doubt that either of them knew what had become of the doctor in that half hour interval. He was in fine voice for his poem.[1]

IV

A few months later, in December of that same year, 1879, I had the honor of uniting in the celebration of Dr. Holmes's seventieth birthday, contributing a poem, Filling an Order, to the post-prandial exercises, at the famous Breakfast given to him by his publishers. It was one of the most notable gatherings of literary celebrities from far and near which Boston had ever witnessed. The

[1] My own poem, read at the Moore Banquet, was Recollections of Lalla Rookh.

Autocrat's own beautiful and touching poem, The Iron Gate, read in a voice at times tenderly playful, at others vibrant with deeper emotion, was of course the memorable event of the Breakfast, and worthy of the audience and the hour. His praises were sounded by others in every key, in prose and verse; but I shall speak here only of my own contribution.

The Order, fabled to have been received by Dame Nature in her laboratory, was for "three geniuses," one a bard, one wise, and one supremely witty, to grace an obscure town by the sea named Boston. The finer ingredients were mixed, and the souls set to steep, each in its glowing vessel: —

In each by turns she poured, she stirred, she skimmed the shining liquor,
Threw laughter in, to make it thin, or thought, to make it thicker;
But when she came to choose the clay, she found, to her vexation,
That, with a stock on hand to fill an order for a nation,
Of that more finely tempered stuff, electric and ethereal,
Of which a genius must be formed, she had but scant material —
For three? for one! What should be done? A bright idea struck her;
Her old witch eyes began to shine, her mouth began to pucker.
Says she, "The fault, I 'm well aware, with genius is, the presence
Of altogether too much clay, with quite too little essence,
And sluggish atoms that obstruct the spiritual solution;

So now, instead of spoiling these by over-much dilution,
With their fine elements I 'll make a single, rare phenomenon,
And of three common geniuses concoct a most uncommon one,
So that the world shall smile to see a soul so universal,
Such poesy and pleasantry, packed in so small a parcel."
So said, so done; the three in one she wrapped, and stuck the label:

Poet, Professor, Autocrat of Wit's own Breakfast-Table.

I had the satisfaction of feeling that I had the audience with me in the reading; and that the fable pleased the subject of it I was gratifyingly assured in a letter I received from him a few days later, from which I cannot forbear quoting a single sentence: —

"I thought your poem excellent when I listened to it, but my hearing is not so sharp as it once was, and I did not know how excellent, how neat, ingenious, terse, artistic it was until I came to read it."

V

One of the later occasions in which my voice was publicly heard with the Autocrat's was the Garden Party, given by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, at Governor Claflin's country house in Newton, to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in celebration of her seventieth birthday. This was in the leafy month of June, 1882. At that open air festival we heard Mrs. Stowe herself, her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, and other celeb-

rities; but the chief event was Dr. Holmes's poem.

The doctor's voice was not remarkable, — it was slightly husky, and lacking in clear resonance, but in his use of it he made you forget that it was not the fittest organ for his purpose; just as you were rendered oblivious of his inferior stature (five feet four or five) by his animation and perfect aplomb. Surely no other so narrow human jaw was ever the gateway of such intelligent and forceful speech ("the smallest adult jaw I ever fitted teeth to," his dentist once said to me); but it had a nervous tension that compensated for its insignificant size. Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier, Hawthorne, Agassiz, like the most of his great contemporaries, might have justified the findings of the phrenologist or physiognomist; but he, even more than Emerson, demonstrated the truth that, of brains, quality is better than quantity, that spirit is more than flesh. He was a living disproof of Whitman's proud attestation that "size is only development."

The Autocrat's voice and manner were never more effective than on that refulgent afternoon at the Claflin Garden Party. Who that was present can ever have forgotten the two opening stanzas of his poem, The World's Homage, in which he fancied people of every land who had read Uncle

Tom summoned to the table, and the Babel of tongues that would have been heard there?

> "Briton and Frenchman, Swede and Dane,
> Turk, Spaniard, Tartar of Ukraine,
> Hidalgo, Cossack, Cadi,
> High Dutchman and Low Dutchman, too,
> The Russian serf, the Polish Jew;
> Arab, Armenian, and Mantchoo,
> Would shout, 'We know the lady!'"

Only to those who heard him can the cold types convey an idea of the emphasis and percussive force of enunciation which he flung into this felicitously rhymed, surprisingly collocated list of names. It was greeted by such an outburst of irrepressible applause as was not heard before or after on that day, not even at the close of his reading. As I joined in the hand-clapping and watched the face of Mrs. Stowe wreathed in smiles, I fortunately forgot my own dozen or more four-line stanzas, snugly folded away in my breast pocket, to be unfolded and to come forth later.

As the persistent and prolonged uproar subsided, it was with a startled feeling that I remembered the ordeal of comparison before me, and with something like a cowardly wish that the verses I had thought tolerably well of up to that moment might be quietly dropped from the catalogue of things to be called for. I must acknow-

ledge that the feeling marred a little my enjoyment of the remainder of Holmes's recital, and was perhaps the cause of my fancying in the subsequent stanzas a falling off from the superlatively bright and vigorous opening. Or was it possible (as these are very frank memoirs, I venture the suggestion), — was it barely possible that I indulged a secret hope that the prestige of those dazzling first flashes might be mercifully tempered, for my sake?

If for a moment I cherished that feeble hope, I had ample time to return to a more resolute and generous frame of mind before delivering my tribute. The doctor was followed by other readers and speakers, who caused my interest in my own forthcoming effort to rise by degrees, to revive, and put forth buds of faith and buoyant expectation, until I finally stepped upon the improvised platform with a tranquil confidence not unjustified, I think, by the reception accorded to my reading of The Cabin. As was inevitable, some of the thoughts in the doctor's poem were paralleled in my own.

> The Slave went forth through all the earth,
> He preached to priest and rabbin;
> He spoke all tongues; in every land
> Opened that lowly Cabin.

VI

One or two briefly told anecdotes must close these desultory reminiscences of one of Boston's most remarkable men. Going once to hear a lecture by Matthew Arnold, I entered the hall early, and, seeing Holmes alone in one of the central seats, took a place beside him for a chat while the audience was coming in. Soon we saw Rev. James Freeman Clarke wandering down one of the side aisles, with his numbered ticket in his hand, scanning the backs of seats.

"There," said the doctor, "is my Double. We were friends in boyhood, we were classmates in college, our orbits are forever crossing; wherever I go he appears. I can no more avoid him than I can my own shadow." While he was relating some curious instance of this seeming fatality, Clarke drew near, still observing the backs of rows; when I inquired, —

"What is your number, Mr. Clarke?" He named it. "Here it is," I said, "beside Dr. Holmes; I am in your seat."

One afternoon, in the years of which I am writing, I chanced to call upon Mr. Longfellow just after he had received a visit from the doctor.

"What a delightful man he is!" said he. "But he has left me, as he generally does, with a head-

ache." When I inquired the cause, he replied: "The movement of his mind is so much more rapid than mine, that I often find it difficult to follow him, and if I keep up the strain for any length of time, a headache is the penalty."

Every one who knew the Autocrat must have been impressed by this trait ascribed to him by Longfellow, — the extraordinary rapidity of his mental processes. Not that he talked fast, but that his turns of thought were surprisingly bright and quick, and often made with a kind of scientific precision, agreeably in contrast with the looseness of statement commonly characterizing those who speak volubly and think fast. In one of the early Autocrat papers he made this comparison: "Writing or printing is like shooting with a rifle; you may hit your reader's mind, or miss it. But talking is like playing at a mark with the pipe of an engine; if it is within reach, and you have time enough, you can't help hitting it." His own talk was less like hose-playing than most men's. It was more like shooting with a rifle, — and it was always sure to hit. In view of this habitual vivacity, how we must marvel at his length of life, measured not by years only, but by the amount of thought and feeling and spiritual energy that animated him throughout his long and fortunate career!

Holmes's place among the writers of his time is distinctly assured. He enriched our literature with a new form of essay as distinctly individual as Montaigne's or Charles Lamb's. In metrical composition his work is voluminous and varied, much of it ephemeral, but all of it lucid and musical; and he has left a few lyrics that take high rank — one of them almost the highest — as pure poetry. A characteristic note is a certain playful tenderness; and I think his Muse charms us most when she appears, like the bride in the ballad, —

> "With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye," —

when the verses are dewy and tremulous with a feeling which the wit irradiates and sets off, yet seems half designed to conceal.

> "Of sweet singers the most sane,
> Of keen wits the most humane."

CHAPTER XIV

LONGFELLOW

I

ALTHOUGH Longfellow was not one of my literary passions, — perhaps because I came under his influence so gradually, — the spirit that breathed in his poems inspired in me a feeling of love and admiration long before I saw him, — a feeling that grew in depth and constancy after I was admitted to his acquaintance, and the acquaintance ripened into friendship.

That honor was rather late in coming to me, entirely through my own perverse neglect of opportunities, which I have elsewhere confessed and deplored. When the hour of meeting came, it was he who took the initial step toward it. Grasping my hand warmly, he began at once to talk to me of my poems with a delightful sincerity that blew away like dandelion woof or thistle-down the last film and feather of my aloofness, and made me humbly ashamed of it, when he inquired earnestly, —

"Why have you never come to see me?"

"Because," I said, "I never felt that the work I have been trying to do gave me any right to intrude myself on your attention." And, with the frankness that is often the twin sister of reserve, I went on to speak of his being already a famous poet, a Cambridge professor, a man representing the highest culture, when I first came to Boston with the odor of my native backwoods still upon me, — without friends, or academic acquirements, or advantages of any sort; — and of the feeling I could never quite get over, of the immense distance between us.

"That," he replied, "is the effect of mirage; it is illusion. At any rate, there is no such distance now." And there never was, from that time forth.

II

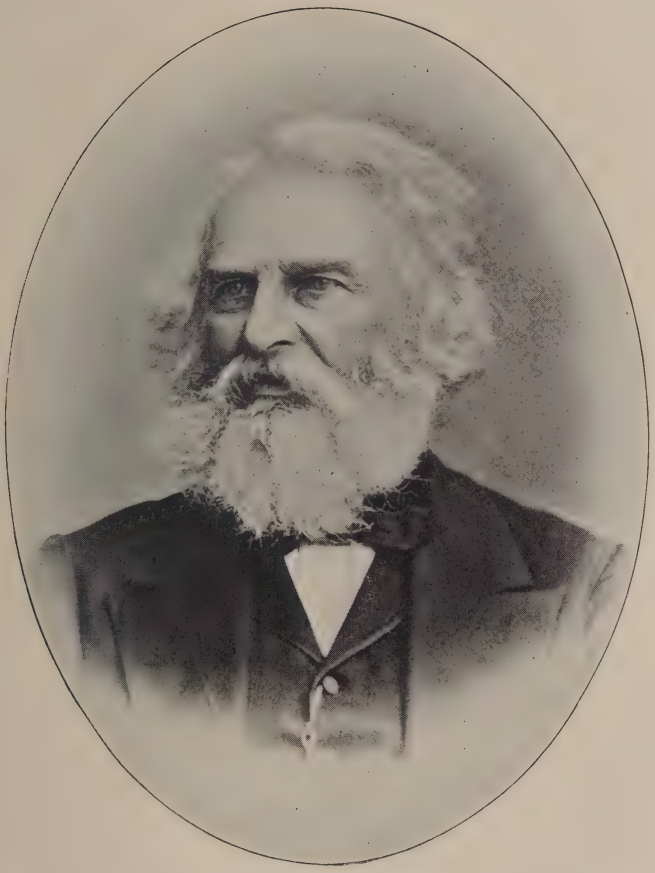
Longfellow was slightly below the medium stature, but of a sufficiently stocky build, well planted on his feet, as the French say; with strong, symmetrical features, which must have been singularly handsome in his youth as they were singularly noble in his later years; the forehead sweeping to a shapely width in constructiveness and ideality; mild blue eyes under fine brows, and hair and beard of patriarchal whiteness. Charles Kingsley said of him in 1868: "I do not think I ever saw a finer human face;"

which might have been truly said of him to the last.

He had the simplicity of manners which belongs to strong, true natures, and a tact and sympathy that prompted him to meet all persons on their own ground of interest and experience. Of all people I ever knew he was the most charitable in speech, tolerant even of faults which society deems it dangerous to condone. I never heard him speak with anything like indignant condemnation of anybody except a certain class of critics who sit in judgment upon works they have neither the heart to feel nor the sense to understand. Some kind friend once sent me a review in which a poor little volume of my own verse was scalped and tomahawked with savage glee. Turning the page, I was consoled to see a volume of Longfellow's treated in the same Ojibway style; for, I reflected, "The critic who strikes at him blunts the weapon with which he would wound others." Meeting him in a day or two, I found that some equally well-meaning friend had sent him a copy of the same review. I was surprised to see how much he was annoyed by it, and said to him, —

"I may well be disturbed when they try to blow out my small lantern, but why should you care when they puff away at your star?"

He replied, "The ill-will of anybody hurts me.



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Besides, there are people who will believe what this man says. If he cannot speak well of a book, why speak of it at all?"

"He must earn his bread," I suggested.

"So," he replied, "must the hired assassin and the highwayman."

III

He had suffered from abundant unjust and foolish criticism in earlier days; but I do not believe his wise, calm spirit was ever more than temporarily ruffled by it. Older readers will remember the very general depreciation, the ridicule in paraphrase and parody, with which Hiawatha was at first received. But Hiawatha quickly came to rival Evangeline in public favor; and the relenting reviewers joined afterwards in the chorus of its praise. Evangeline had likewise been the subject of much adverse comment, especially in respect to the hexameters, which were declared unsuited for English verse. Poe's ridicule of them remains a brilliant example of a style of criticism common in the middle of the last century, but which is hardly possible among self-respecting men of letters to-day. Having resorted to the old trick of printing as prose a passage selected for his purpose, to illustrate the absence of the spondee, indispensable in the Greek hexameter,

he went on to say that he could manage the point Longfellow and others had missed; giving as a sample these lines, in which the spondee is very much in evidence: —

"Du tell! when shall we hope to make men of sense out of the Pundits
Born and brought up with their snouts deep down in the mud of the Frog Pond?
Why ask? who ever yet saw money made out of a fat old Jew, or downright, upright nutmegs out of a pine knot?"

This was very funny; and "du tell," "deep down," "Frog Pond," and the like are good spondees. But Poe himself felt obliged to apologize for the dactyls; "hope to make," "men of sense," "born and brought," which take the place of dactyls, being, properly speaking, not dactyls at all. Such criticism goes to show that the Greek and Latin hexameter is not possible in English verse, nor in any verse that is scanned by accents, and not by long and short syllables. This Longellow knew as well as anybody, and what he attempted was some such adaptation of it as Goethe had brought into favor with German readers in his Hermann und Dorothea. Poe's travesty had long been forgotten, or it was kept in the minds of men only by Poe's growing fame as a poet, and Longfellow could well afford to smile at it benignantly, as he did at that and Poe's other attacks

upon him, when I once ventured to recall them to his mind; for his choice of metre, and his easy management of it, had been amply justified by time and the judgment of mankind; the flowing hexameters which relate Evangeline's beautiful story continuing to be read, then as now, by learned and unlearned alike, with perennial delight.

IV

Longfellow had little of Holmes's facility in writing occasional verses, and still less of Holmes's boyish delight in reciting them. Yet Holmes himself never wrote anything more graceful than the tribute to Agassiz on his fiftieth birthday, or more delightfully rollicking than the other Agassiz poem, Noël, written in French, — a trifle, indeed, but yet a *tour de force*, appreciated by those at least to whom French is an acquired tongue, and who have adventured their poetic feet among the hedges and pitfalls of the hiatus and other artificial restrictions of French verse. It may be in place here to repeat what Longfellow's brother-in-law, Thomas G. Appleton, once said to me of the poet's mastery of modern languages and literatures. "It is an accomplishment which his fame as a poet has too much overshadowed, but which should give him a foremost reputation among American scholars."

Holmes could hang his halo of verse on any star of occasion, but Longfellow needed an impulse from within. When urged by his Bowdoin classmates to write something for their semi-centennial anniversary, no happy thought suggested itself, and he hastened to unburden his mind of the care and responsibility of such a task by positively declining it. Then came the inspiring motive of Morituri Salutamus, one of his noblest poems, drawn from the deeps of his poetic nature, and written in a glow of enjoyment chilled only by the prospective ordeal of public delivery. The final announcement that he was to appear in person and read his poem thrilled with joyous expectation every son of Bowdoin, and rallied to the college, on the eventful day, such throngs of its alumni and friends as it never saw gathered before. I think that, when the hour came, he rather enjoyed what he had dreaded; and his kindly nature must have been gratified by an opportunity of giving pleasure to so many. I asked a Bowdoin man how Longfellow bore himself. "Finely!" he said. "I could n't hear him, but it was glory enough to have him there, and to have his poem in print afterwards."

V

His voice was ill fitted for public speaking; it was habitually gentle and low, and it was irksome for him to raise it above the conversational pitch. I never heard it on any public occasion except once. At the great Boston Banquet given by Houghton, Mifflin and Company in honor of Whittier's seventieth birthday, it was with the utmost difficulty that Whittier himself could be prevailed upon to be present. Growing old was bad enough, he said, "without being twitted of it," — as Pickard relates in his full and graphic Life of the poet. A sense of the incongruity of such a performance with the principal character left out finally prevailed over his diffidence; almost at the last hour he consented to appear, and in acknowledgment of the tremendous ovation that greeted him, he spoke a few well-chosen but rather hesitating words, which could not be called a speech. Even then he would not trust himself to read the poem he had prepared, and which he had in advance engaged Longfellow to read for him. Longfellow introduced the poem with some easy conversational remarks; in them, and in the reading of Whittier's Response, his manner was self-possessed and unaffected; but his voice lacked carrying quality; and although I

was in a position to catch the lowest words distinctly, I judged, by the hollowing of hands behind ears, that neither he nor Whittier was heard well at the remoter tables.

Longfellow, Emerson, and Holmes were the chief guests of honor, besides Whittier himself. Holmes, of course, had a poem to read, and he read it with his usual enunciative vigor. Emerson, who was already beginning to show signs of the decay of his powers which progressed slowly but fatally in the following years, made a few remarks laudatory of Whittier, and particularly of Whittier's Ichabod, which he then proceeded to read, not very effectively, as it proved.[1]

[1] I had also prepared, by invitation, a poem to read at the Whittier Banquet; but as the subject of it withdrew in the midst of the proceedings in his honor, and before my place in the programme had been reached, I quietly followed his example, left the speakers still speaking (at eleven o'clock), and reserved my *Story of the Barefoot Boy* for later publication. It was founded on an incident of the poet's boyhood, which I had from his younger brother Matthew, and which I told very much as it was told to me, except that I put it into rhyme, and transferred the scene to the open air from the bedroom and bed where it actually occurred. Pickard, in his Life of Whittier, describes the chamber in which the two boys slept, and, alluding to the poem, adds: "The two little Quaker boys had found they could lift each other, and one evening experimented upon the proposition made by the elder, that by lifting each other in turn they could rise to the ceiling, and there was no knowing how much further if they were out of doors! The prudent lads first tried the

VI

The reading of Ichabod was regarded by Longfellow as one of two unfortunate mistakes which were committed, by famous guests, on that memorable evening. In talking over the Banquet with me a day or two after, he asked if I was not amazed at Emerson's want of tact in selecting such a poem for such an occasion.

"Why, no," I answered in some surprise; "it did n't strike me so. I have always thought Ichabod one of Whittier's strongest poems, — perhaps his very strongest political poem."

"But what a terrible denunciation of Webster!" he exclaimed. "It was perhaps well enough for the time when it was written; but the passions of men have cooled, and I am sure Whittier himself regrets having made so terrible an attack upon our greatest statesman, — once the idol of Massachusetts, and still believed in by

experiment, standing upon the bed in their little room. Trowbridge says: —

"'T was a shrewd notion, none the less,
And still, in spite of ill success,
It somehow has succeeded.
Kind Nature smiled on that wise child,
Nor could her love deny him
The large fulfillment of his plan,
Since he who lifts his brother man
In turn is lifted by him.'"

a large number of those present at the dinner. Why bring up again, at such a time, a subject that must be offensive to many?"

I had not regarded it in that light; it was characteristic of Longfellow's large charity that he had. When I said I hardly thought the partisanship of the poem was noticed by the audience, he immediately began to make excuses for Emerson, saying, "Of course, he took only the literary view of it, as you did."

I thought this curiously illustrative of the difference in temperament between Longfellow and his two distinguished friends. He lacked the fine ethical energy of Emerson and the forceful impulse of the Quaker poet, while his abhorrence of oppression was no doubt as great as theirs. He was not formed for conflict; he shrank from severity of censure and deprecated injustice even to the unjust. He who had written and published Poems on Slavery as early as 1842, when to utter a word against the divinely appointed institution was to invite opprobrium, — he who was Charles Sumner's closest friend, admiring in him the warfare he was himself unfitted to wage, — must be ranked as a fearless and consistent opponent of slavery, notwithstanding the charge of time-serving once brought against him for consenting to the omission of the slavery pieces from an edition

of his poems otherwise complete. This was no sacrifice of principle, although he perhaps yielded too much to the representations of the publisher, who was packing his goods, so to speak, for a market the gates of which were too narrow for that load. These were not his best poems, nor even his second best; they continued to be issued in other editions, and their suppression in that particular one showed no such "subserviency to the slave power" as some abolitionists, notably Parker in one of his sermons, indignantly averred. His reprobation of Webster's course was as deep as that of the more fiery Whittier, whom it inspired to write Ichabod, or of the philosophic Emerson, when it drew him from his studious solitudes, and moved him to declare, in a public discourse on the Fugitive Slave Law, "Every drop of blood in this man's veins has eyes that look downward." While deploring the great statesman's advocacy of that law, Longfellow's broad charity and calm equipoise of opinion led him to judge the man himself more as posterity is judging him.

That Holmes had a son who enlisted in our Civil War and was dangerously wounded is a circumstance that has been kept in the memory of men by the Autocrat's narrative of his Hunt for the Captain, and by the Captain's subsequent

career as an eminent jurist. It is not so well remembered that Longfellow likewise gave a son to his country's service in the great conflict against slavery, a son who was also dangerously wounded at the front, and whom the father similarly hastened to seek and bring home.

VII

Once we were speaking of the prices paid to the best writers by the best periodicals, when Longfellow remarked that he could never get over the feeling that one hundred dollars was a very large sum for a poem of perhaps not half a hundred lines. I said it did not seem so to me, even if we considered merely the labor that went into it, let alone the name and fame of the author.

"You would think differently," he said, "if you had written as many poems for three and five dollars each as I have," — those being the prices he had received for some of his earlier well-known pieces, which he named. The immortal Psalm of Life — which, with the marks it bears of an imperfect mastery of the art he was afterwards to bring to such perfection, yet breathes the inmost spirit of his genius, — the poem that may almost be said to have established his reputation — was sold for three or five dollars (certainly not more than five, — I think he told me three) to the

Knickerbocker Magazine, in which it first appeared. This was in 1838. Through the agency of his versatile friend, Samuel Ward, in New York, he was enabled in a few years to command three or four times five dollars for anything he chose to write, — fifteen or twenty dollars being really a dazzling price for a poem in those days.

The Hanging of the Crane was disposed of to the New York Ledger for an exceptionally large sum; the history of which transaction was related to me by Longfellow about the time it took place. The poem was finished in December, 1873, and sent to Ward in New York, who received it with rapture, and wrote that he thought his "trotting friend Bonner" would pay "two guineas a line for it." As it comprised about two hundred lines, this meant a little more than two thousand dollars. Mr. Fields advised that it should not appear in any periodical, but be issued at once in a small and elegant illustrated volume. Longfellow held the matter in consideration for a month or more, then consented that the poem should be submitted to Bonner, who promptly proposed to pay one thousand dollars for it, — about five dollars a line. Longfellow thought this offer munificent enough, and would have accepted it unquestioningly; but Ward demurred, contending that such a poem from so famous an author

should have a higher value for the Ledger, — a sheet that had founded its enormous success mainly on the stories of Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. Bonner thereupon consulted his lawyer, a man of liberal views, who said: "Ward is right. Send Longfellow a check for three thousand dollars, and give Ward an honorarium of one thousand for his mediation." Bonner was himself a man of the most liberal disposition, which was evinced not only in practical matters, but in those of a more personal nature; as when, the Ledger having gradually outgrown the Cobb, Jr., style of story, instead of casting out with business-like indifference the writer who had been so useful to him, Bonner retired him on a pension of four thousand dollars a year, which Mr. Cobb enjoyed in his home in Norway, Maine, after he had ceased to write, and as long as he lived.

Bonner saw the force of his lawyer's suggestion; and so it happened that The Hanging of the Crane appeared in the Ledger at an expense to that paper of four thousand dollars, three fourths of which went to Longfellow, and one fourth to Ward. Considering that it was afterwards issued by the poet's publishers in a sumptuous holiday edition that had an immense sale, it is safe to say that this poem of two hundred lines was, for its length, the "best paid" piece of purely literary work ever produced.

VIII

In speaking of this poem I am reminded of a poetical figure in it that may have been suggested by one in my own poem, Service, which had appeared in The Atlantic Monthly some time before. I had written: —

> "For me the diamond dawns are set
> In rings of beauty."

In Longfellow's lines the image is reversed, the dazzling dawn becomes the smiling close of day, and the sun

> "Like a ruby from the horizon's ring
> Drops down into the night."

Longfellow was of course unconscious of this adaptation, — if indeed it was an adaptation, and not a figure that had arisen independently in his own mind; although Service was a poem of which he had spoken to me of having read.

His imagination, like that of every true poet, was the haunt of suggestions that had come to him often from unknown sources and by unremembered ways, — teeming fancies ready to start forth in the light and take place and shape in the page they were needed to adorn. Sometimes the thought that first appeared in one form reappeared in another; as when the poet wrote in his journal (November 18, 1850), "This college work

is like a great hand laid on all the strings of my lyre, stopping their vibrations," and afterwards, in The Golden Legend, —

> "Time has laid his hand
> Upon my heart, gently, not smiting it,
> But as a harper lays his open palm
> Upon his harp, to deaden its vibrations."

I do not know that anybody had used this image before; but in Excelsior he had written, —

> "A voice falls like a falling star," —

to discover later (as he notes in his diary) that Brainerd had already said the same thing of the mocking-bird's note, —

> "It falls
> As a lost star falls down into the marsh."

Wordsworth has in one of his odes, —

> "All treasures hoarded by the miser Time," —

which Longfellow, as he notes again in his diary, had never read when in his Ode to a Child he wrote, —

> "The buried treasures of the miser Time."

He was generally fortunate enough to detect these echoes or resemblances in advance of the critics, but not always: as when the one striking image, in the one memorable poem of the Bishop of Chichester, — rendered memorable only by this

circumstance, — reappeared as the "muffled drums" of the Psalm of Life, and brought down upon him the injurious charge of plagiarism. As he himself observes in his journal, "One cannot strike a spade in the soil of Parnassus without disturbing the bones of some dead poet."

Here again I am reminded of a thought which I once adapted from him, and which must have persisted in my mind long after I had forgotten that it had any other source than my own imagination. Early in 1858 I wrote the following winter piece, which I print here to illustrate a curious literary circumstance relating to two names of much greater interest than my own: —

When evening closes, and without
I hear the snow-storm drive and sift,
And Boreas plunge with many a shout
Into the tree and through the drift,
Methinks that up and down,
With his merry, mocking clown,
Goes the old king who gave away his crown.

The king so old and gray!
Alas, alas the day
That saw him part his golden crown
To deck fair Summer's forehead gay
And Autumn's tresses brown!
The cruel sisters twain
Have robbed him of his train;
And now all night he laughs and raves,
And beats his breast and sings wild staves,

And scatters his white hair over the graves.
A mad and broken-hearted Lear,
He roams the earth with crazèd brain;
Ah, would the gentle Spring were here,
The sweet Cordelia of the year,
To soothe his bitter pain!

Fondly believing this to be original, and thinking tolerably well of it, I handed it to Underwood for The Atlantic. He likewise thought well of it, and took it to Cambridge, for Lowell's acceptance. It came back to me with the comment that it had a fault. This was not the overworked and worn-out classic Boreas, which certainly had no business in so modern a composition, and which could easily have been changed to North Wind. Nor yet was it the bookish "methinks," in the use of which I might have pleaded the example of Hawthorne, who even puts it into the colloquial speech of some of his characters, — if ever the speech of Hawthorne's characters may be termed "colloquial." As for the feeble inversions, "forehead gay," and "tresses brown," — where the adjective is placed after the noun for the too obvious convenience of the rhythm and rhyme, — they were indeed blemishes, which I was to have sense and conscience enough to banish altogether and forever from my later verse, along with all such earmarks of the conventional poetic diction; although I might have justified them by adducing

the usage of poets the most renowned. But the fault that condemned my winter piece was none of these. It was the worst of all faults. The leading idea of the poem was stolen — "Longfellowniously obtained," as Underwood laughingly said, quoting, I think, his editor-in-chief. I immediately looked up the Midnight Mass for the Dying Year, and was dismayed to find there the image I had so shamelessly plagiarized : —

> "The foolish, fond old Year
> Crowned with wild flowers and with heather
> Like weak despisèd Lear;"

the comparison being carried further in the succeeding stanzas.

Of course I did not print the poem in The Atlantic, or anywhere else, but flung it aside in wrath and humiliation, and hardly ever gave it a thought afterwards, until I was reminded of it by the aforementioned curious circumstance, to the point of which I am now coming. It is this : in Lowell's volume, Under the Willows and Other Poems, which appeared ten years later (1868), the title poem has on page 10 these lines : —

> "And Winter suddenly, like crazy Lear,
> Reels back, and brings the dead May in his arms."

Now this was also undoubtedly an unconscious appropriation of the same image that I had "Long-

fellowniously obtained;" and the incomprehensible thing about it is that Lowell should have picked up, and pocketed, and afterwards have stuck into his poetical shirt front, the little gem, the ownership of which he had detected in my more expansive setting. The only explanation seems to be that he had forgotten both Longfellow's original and my imitation, and reproduced the idea as innocently as poets are all liable to reproduce ideas, — as he himself reproduced a line of Shelley in an earlier part of the same poem (Under the Willows), where he describes the West (west wind) —

"Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud;" —

which are certainly the English poet's "white fleecy clouds" over again, —

"Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind."

IX

Longfellow was accustomed to receive all sorts of people, some of whom sought him out for the most whimsical reasons; like the English visitors who said to him with astounding frankness, "As there are no ruins in this country we thought we would come and see *you*." The old colonial Craigie mansion, with its windows commanding the broad valley where —

"The flooded Charles . . .
Writes the last letter of his name,"

was unquestionably, both from its earlier and later associations, the most attractive house in Cambridge. But I was always so much more interested in the man I went to see there than in anything else in or about it, or even in the memories of the great Washington, whose historical headquarters it had been, that I never really saw it, save in the most partial and casual manner, until one afternoon, when some ladies sent in their cards just as I was taking leave. They came with the modest request that they might be shown the house and "just speak with Mr. Longfellow if he was n't too busy to see them." He promptly gave orders that they should be admitted, and turning to me, said, "Stay, and help me entertain these callers;" which I was very glad to do, as it gave me an opportunity of seeing, with him for cicerone, not only such parts of the house and the things in it as I had seen before, though never so advantageously, but other parts, with their numerous objects of interest. Our host, in his genial way, tried to palm me off also as an "object of interest," but without distinguished success.

Beginning with the room in which the visitors found us, — the front room at the right of the

entrance, once General Washington's official headquarters, but in later years the poet's study, in which so many of his famous poems had been written, — he had some simple but illuminating word of association or suggestion for every object to which he called attention: among many other precious things, perhaps the most precious, uniform bindings of the original manuscripts of his works, nearly complete, and shelved behind glass, — all in his own unvarying, beautifully round, upright hand, the most of them in pencil; Coleridge's inkstand, always in sight on his centre-table; sand of the desert in an hourglass (subject of his well-known poem); in the drawing-room an exquisitely carved agate cup, the work of Benvenuto Cellini, which had once belonged to the poet Rogers; everywhere portraits and pictures, among these Buchanan Read's painting of Longfellow's Daughters, which was then well known to the public through photographic copies, and which, by an ambiguity in the grouping, had given rise to the absurd story that one of Longfellow's children had no arms. Regarding this monstrous fable he said: "My friend Lowell once heard a loud-talking woman expatiating upon it in an omnibus full of passengers, and took occasion to correct the popular error, saying that he knew the family, and that he could vouch for each of the

children having a good pair of arms. The woman retorted, 'I have it on the best authority!' and that settled it."

He had a fund of quiet humor in relating traditions connected with the old house; one of which commemorated an occasion when Washington was said to have indulged in the laughter so rare with him. It was when General Putnam brought to headquarters an old woman taken as a spy, whom he carried, reluctant and struggling, on his back into the house, — a sight which proved too much for the gravity even of the Father of his Country. After the ladies were gone I asked Mr. Longfellow if such visits were not sometimes a bore to him. "Yes," he said, "if the comers are pretentious or shallow-minded; then I make as quick work with them as courtesy will allow. But these were sincere persons, and I am glad to have afforded them a pleasure which was evidently so much to them, and which they will remember all their lives."

"And the memory of which they will transmit to their children," I could not help adding.

X

His conversation was simple and easy, and often enlivened by a genial pleasantry, to me more welcome than the wit that keeps the listener too

much alert. I never heard him make a pun. And never, in my presence, did there fall from his lips an expression that had in it any flavor of slang, except on one occasion. At the time when the Nineteenth Century magazine was launched, we were discussing Tennyson's sonnet, which appeared, a proud figure-head, on the prow of the first number. I remarked that it had one particularly expressive line, —

> "Now in this roaring moon
> Of daffodil and crocus."

Longfellow's face lighted up, as he took a stride across his hearth, repeated the words, and stopping before me, exclaimed, "It is a fine thing to have one strong line go *ripping* through a sonnet!"

It has been said, by one who had exceptional opportunities for knowing him, that Longfellow seldom if ever mentioned his distinguished contemporaries, either to criticise or commend. This does not accord with my recollection of the various conversations I had with him. Rarely indeed did a word of disapproval fall from those gracious lips; but he was by no means reticent or lukewarm when there was occasion for praise. I have already quoted his comments on Emerson and Whittier, in connection with the Ichabod incident. He once spoke freely of Emerson's faulty ear,

and said that in at least one instance Emerson rivaled Whittier in the badness of his rhymes, —

> "Who bides at home, nor looks abroad,
> Carries the eagles, and masters the sword."

But then he went on to speak of The Snow-Storm as a perfect gem of blank verse, citing the description of the housemates gathered —

> "Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
> *In a tumultuous privacy of storm*," —

and pronouncing the last to be one of the most beautifully suggestive lines written by any modern poet.

Bayard Taylor's feat, reported at the time, of writing in a single night, immediately upon the arrival of the book in America, a review of Victor Hugo's La Légende des Siècles, giving metrical translations of some of the poems, — all remarkably well done, and occupying a page or two (I have forgotten just how much space, and am afraid to say two or three pages) in the next morning's Tribune, — this he pronounced an achievement of which probably no other man in America would have been capable. He expressed great admiration for Taylor's varied gifts, and remarked, "How narrowly he escapes being a great poet!" adding that he had facility, rhetoric, feeling, a sense of beauty and melody, yet lacked the last "indefinable touch."

XI

His ways with young children were exceedingly gracious and winning. My own girls (then very young indeed) had been kept out of sight whenever he called, until one day, hearing their laughter in the hall, he asked to see them. Overawed by his gray hair and beard and venerable aspect, but attracted by his smile, they approached with bashful pleasure as he held out his arms to them ; when he broke down all barriers by saying, —

"Where are your dolls? I want you to show me your dolls! Not the fine ones you keep for company, but those you love best and play with every day."

Before the mother could interfere, they had taken him at his word, and brought the shabby little favorites with battered noses, and were eagerly telling him their names and histories, while he questioned them with an interest that wholly won their childish hearts. Notwithstanding its humorous and homely aspect, — or partly perhaps on account of it, — the scene suggested a more beautiful and human picture of the often treated subject, "Suffer little children to come unto me," than any I ever beheld.

On another occasion I took the elder of the little girls to see him, along with some Western

relatives, who thought their visit to the East would miss its crowning satisfaction if they should go back without seeing Longfellow. We found other company at the house, and the conversation had become so animated that the presence of the child was forgotten by everybody except our host. Suddenly he arose with a smile, saying, "I can't bear that little Grace should n't also be entertained!" and going into the hall, he set the musical clock to playing its tunes for her, while her elders talked.

He sometimes brought to see me his intimate and almost lifelong friend, Professor George W. Greene, the historian, of Greenwich, R. I.; and at one of their visits our Windsor, then a boy of thirteen, took us out on the lake in his boat. Professor Greene, who was in feeble health, wished to pull an oar; Windsor, full of health and spirits, pulled the other, and pulled too hard for him. This he continued to do, notwithstanding my remonstrance, — being slow to realize how much it was needful that he should moderate his stroke, — when Mr. Longfellow said, —

"Let him row his own way! He enjoys it; and we must n't interfere with a boy's happiness. It makes no difference to us whether we go forward or only circle round and round." An incident in itself slight, but illustrative of his thoughtful regard for the happiness of the young.

XII

It was while walking alone with me once on the shore of that lake (Arlington Lake, or Spy Pond), that Mr. Longfellow, after stopping to gaze for some moments in silence at the island and the distant banks, overleaned by willows and water-maples, said to me, —

"Why have you never put this lake into a poem?"

I said I supposed it was because I had it in view every day. "When I get away from it, then very likely my imagination will come back to it, and I may write something about it."

"Don't wait for that," he replied; "do it now!"

I have always regretted that I did not then and there enter into an agreement with him that we should each write a poem on the subject. What a precious companion piece we might then have had to his Cadenabbia and Songo River! I can almost imagine these lines, inspired by Lake Como, to have been breathed by his Muse that very afternoon, as we stood gazing from our shore: —

"Sweet vision! do not fade away;
Linger until my heart shall take
Into itself the summer day,
And all the beauty of the lake!"

ARLINGTON LAKE (SPY POND)

This was in September. I waited until the glory of the month of May was on the wooded shores and the reflecting water, then, in memory of his inspiring suggestion, I wrote Menotomy Lake.

I cannot forbear quoting here the last letter I ever received from him, it is so characteristic of the kindness of heart that prompted him, even in illness, to pen with his own hand a brief message that he knew would carry happiness to a friend. The same sheet bore the printed announcement which his family were then sending to his correspondents: "On account of illness, Mr. Longfellow finds it impossible to answer any letters at present;" a circumstance that rendered all the more touching his voluntary note to me. And it became still more sacredly precious when it proved, not only the last to me, but one of the last letters he ever wrote. The poem referred to was Three Worlds.

CAMBRIDGE, *Dec.* 16, 1881.

DEAR MR. TROWBRIDGE, — What a beautiful poem is this of yours in the January Atlantic!

I have read it with delight, and cannot help writing a line to say so.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

XIII

In him passed the most purely poetical of the entire group of our early singers. Bryant, journalist and politician, would now be forgotten as a poet but for Thanatopsis, the lines To a Waterfowl, and one or two other pieces. The reputation of Poe — a man of genius, if ever there was one, but an adventurer, and also something of a charlatan — likewise rests upon three or four poems, one might almost say on one or two. Whittier, prophet and reformer, had extraordinary poetic sensitiveness and a winning spirituality, but (certainly until his later years) he was too much an *improvisatore* to regard uniform excellence in his work. Whitman brought sheaves in abundance, but too often with stubble plucked up by the roots and the soil adhering. Holmes was a wit and a man of science; Lowell, satirist, essayist, diplomatist, and assuredly a poet, but one whose affluence of fancy and largeness of culture did not insure him always against incongruousness of metaphor and roughness of utterance; Emerson, pursuing ever the loftiest ideals, yet a transcendent master of crystalline prose rather than of rhythmical harmonies. Longfellow was not the greatest of the group. He was neither brilliant nor versatile nor intense; great power

[*Autograph lines from "Three Worlds"*]

About our common mother earth
The blue sea ether
Warm holds her in its fatherly girth,
The clouds encircle her.

Forever mystery, love, the soul's
Boundless ideal,
Like a diviner ether wraps
About the real.

And o'er and o'er can still outpace
The highest creation
With its own dreams and vaulted faces
Of aspiration.

John Townsend Trowbridge

and great passion were not among his gifts; the charm of his verse is more in sentiment and atmosphere than in any distinctively vigorous intellectual quality. But he was always the poet, devoted to the poet's ultimate aims, and, amid all the distractions of college work or other duties and interests, breathing the cool airs of the Parnassian groves.

Every great reputation is certain to be dimmed by time, and to suffer from comparison with dazzling new stars, even with meteors that flash transitorily across the sky. Longfellow is no exception to the rule; it has even become a fashion to decry his poetry as commonplace. He did not experiment in many metres, nor startle us with audacities, nor witch the world with haunting melodies. Commonplace his poetry undoubtedly is, inasmuch as it has entered into our literature and into our lives, and has so ceased to be a novelty, — commonplace too, possibly, here and there, in a more depreciatory sense. But, when all admissions are made, may we not ask — passing over without mention his more important productions, those on which his fame is mainly based — is it not pertinent to inquire what writers of to-day, on either side of the sea, are blending thought and feeling in such forms of beauty as The Two Angels, The Bridge, The Arsenal at

Springfield, The Birds of Killingworth, — and a long list beside of poems as full of a wise, sweet humanity and as perfect in their art?

His work, more than most men's, was the outgrowth of his character; and the same might almost be said of the circumstances of his life, which seemed the natural branching and foliage of the genius they were to support and enfold. But for the one overwhelming catastrophe of his home (not forgetting the earlier intimate affliction), I know of no other so altogether happy and harmonious career. He lived long in the enjoyment of the fullness of his fame, and died the most widely read and best beloved poet of the English tongue.

No more fitting, no more touching tribute can be paid to him than in the words of his most illustrious contemporary, who, in his own darkening years, when his memory was in eclipse, and those sky-piercing faculties showed like shattered peaks amid clouds, having stood long by the open coffin of his friend, and gazed his last upon the features death had stilled, murmured gently, "I do not remember his name, but he was a beautiful soul."

A beautiful soul in very truth he was.

CHAPTER XV

CLOSING NUMBERS

I

WHAT I have thus far written of my life seems not much more than shaping a path through the woodland, broadly scoring now and then a waymark and opening up a vista, but leaving on either side aisles of light and deeps of shade unsurmised, and affording few glimpses of the boundless blue above. When the work has gone irrevocably out of my hands, I shall doubtless be better able than I am now to determine how much more, or how much less, should have been told.

I had it in mind to write more fully of some worthies whom I have barely mentioned, and to fill out a page here and there with notes upon others whom I have not found it convenient to mention at all; particularly to call up again a few of the stars that within my recollection have shone above the charmed horizon of the footlights: the great contralto, Alboni, full-orbed, refulgent, who appeared in Boston concerts two years after Jenny Lind, and remains

to me a hardly less glorious memory than that peerless queen of song; the lithe, electric Rachel and the truly royal Ristori, both of whom I saw in Paris now almost fifty years ago; our own Charlotte Cushman, an actress of exceptional force and talent, the ideal Meg Merrilies (barring some harsh stage mannerisms), full of pathetic dignity as Queen Katharine, but almost too virile and unlovely a Lady Macbeth, and still less fitted for Rosalind, or any character endowed with delicacy and charm; the elder Booth, who lacked the well-modulated art of his eminent son Edwin, yet possessed more native genius, — small of stature, but all nerve and fire, — who could enact Richard III. to the wild joy of the groundlings, or Iago to the calm satisfaction of the judicious; Forrest, whose robustiousness in rending a passion made one too often forget his really great qualities (conspicuous in King Lear), and his admirable elocution (noticeable even in a part so wholly unsuited to him as Hamlet); last, but in power foremost of all the histrionic personages, early or late, American or foreign, whom I have had the good fortune to see, — the Italian whose superb personality united the most consummate art with the most prodigious energy, — Tommaso Salvini. Nor, since I name these, should I omit from the list Dickens as a personator of his own

creations, — Micawber, the Wellers, Buzfuz, and the rest, — whose Boston readings in 1867 I distinctly recall; a brisk little man most exquisitely attired, with a button-hole rose, glittering studs and rings, a heavy fob-chain festooning his low-cut waistcoat; a bald crown, and a portentous port-wine complexion, which a maroon-colored screen, always in place behind him on the platform, and a maroon-colored desk in front, were artfully designed to relieve; a theatrical manner, a worn-out actor's voice, and many false intonations (the rising inflection being much too insistent), but with marvelously mobile features, an animation of style and a contagious sense of his own fun which would have redeemed worse faults.

II

Of other influences than those I have designated, which have affected decisively my views of life, I ought to mention, more particularly than I have yet done, Darwin's great work on the Origin of Species. Singularly enough, I was first made acquainted with it by its most able and famous, most learned and persistent assailant. Shortly after the book appeared I heard Agassiz restate its main facts and arguments so fairly, so fully, so convincingly, that although he ended by declaring, "I don't believe a word of it!" I was left

confronted by the substantial truth of what, to my apprehension, all the reasons he proceeded to array against it failed to overthrow. Not that I ever accepted the unmodified Darwinian doctrine in all its implications. Within its province it threw vivid light upon many things, but it cast no ray into the Infinite Beyond.

Counterbalancing that influence was one yet more potent, of which I must also make mention, if only in briefest terms.

Fully half a century ago I became familiar with the phenomena of spiritualism, and had in my early and late investigations of them some quite astounding experiences, which no arguments based upon "jugglery," "hypnotism," "thought-transference," "subliminal consciousness," or anything of that sort, under whatever guise, could ever explain away. I was convinced that, under all the frauds and foibles that could be charged against mediums and their dupes, there were living truths, — that man has spirit-discerning powers, and that those who have embarked before us on the Unknown may send back to us signals more or less intelligible through the mists that have closed in upon their voyage. I found in the communications so much that was confused and misleading that I gradually ceased to consult them after I had become fully satisfied as to their

source; but the faith, thus established, has never faltered; and to it I have owed, especially in times of bereavement, many consolations. Even though the identity of the voices may sometimes rest in doubt, much yet remains. The assurance remains, not new indeed, but once more vitally renewed, that the mind has occult faculties rarely developed in this state of existence, which presuppose a more ethereal condition fitted for their unfolding, as the submerged bud of the water-lily, struggling upward from the ooze, and groping dimly through the grosser element, is a prophecy of the light and air in which it is to open and flower.

III

Perhaps I ought to state that I have endeavored always to do the duties of a private citizen in the humblest capacity, on school committees, on juries, as public library trustee, and in furthering objects of utility and charity. My temperament and my tastes have kept me out of public life, but since the nomination of Fremont for the presidency I have been deeply interested in national politics, as a liberal and an optimist, in the fullest sense of those words. I have had a very pleasant experience of public audiences in lecturing and in reading from my own works.

I account it a specially good fortune that I have been able to meet every important business engagement I ever made, with a single exception. In all my dealings with publishers and editors I have never once failed to deliver, promptly as promised, the manuscript of a book, an editorial, or magazine article, or chapter of a serial story I may have been writing, with the printers counting on my weekly or monthly copy; and I have been equally favored in keeping my other appointments with the exception mentioned, — a Western lecturing tour, which in quite recent years I was compelled by illness to abandon when I was actually on my way to fill the dates booked for me. It would be baseness on my part to make a statement of this sort in any boastfulness of spirit; I give it, on the contrary, simply as a part of my record, and with devout thankfulness that I have been enabled thus to keep my mind clear from the clouds of unmet obligations.

IV

Of what the world calls "honors" I have none I care to speak of; although, also as a matter of record, I may mention the honorary degree of "A. M." received from Dartmouth College, and the large silver medal of the Massachusetts Humane Society, conferred for "humane exertions"

in saving a life in circumstances of difficulty and danger (in January, 1872) : circumstances which were in fact such that a stalwart spectator — who stood in an excited but helpless crowd on the shore of Mystic Lake, and saw me go out alone on treacherous ice, regardless of wild warning cries, with no support but two fragments of board I had hurriedly torn from a fence, and drag a drowning boy out of the water, in which I was myself partly submerged by the sinking of the ice under one of my boards — exclaimed vehemently, as I drippingly regained the bank with the boy, "I would n't have done that, not for ten million dollars!" The medal, or rather the act it was designed to commemorate, I valued as attesting qualities the quietest life may conceal, even from their possessor; nor was my satisfaction in it disturbed by a neighboring farmer's saying that the boy "was the worst melon thief in town, and I might as well have let him drown." It was this incident that suggested my story of The Silver Medal, written a few years later.

V

I still keep my Pleasant Street home in Arlington, to which it is always a gratification to return, after absences long or short, — the longer the absence the greater the gratification. The

longest absence was when I spent three years abroad with my young family (from 1888 to 1891), chiefly in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and France, — an experience of interest and benefit to us all, especially to the two older children, then at the susceptible period of early girlhood, when the art of the masters, the foreign languages heard spoken, and the people and scenes observed, are instinctively absorbed.

I was one of the first to discover the advantages of Kennebunkport (Maine) as a seaside resort; and after spending parts of a number of summers there, in 1887 I built a house of my own on Cape Arundel, where I generally manage to pass with some members of my family a few quiet weeks each season by the surge-buffeted ledges that divide Wells Bay from the open Atlantic.

VI

The friend who did more than any one else to induce me to write these recollections — who has since passed to where, "beyond these voices, there is peace" — thought I ought to insist upon a point which he deemed somewhat exceptional in the experience of imaginative writers. Not only can few who will tell their stories look back so far, but fewer still have from the beginning of their careers relied for a subsistence upon their pens.

THE TROWBRIDGE HOME, ARLINGTON

Nearly every successful writer I know has had in his youth or in time of need an independent income, or a public office, or an editorship, or some other regular occupation to relieve him from the constant necessity of harrowing his wits for daily bread. This is as it should be. I should not dare, even in these more propitious days, to give any young man such advice as kind old Major Noah gave to me. To the most actively creative mind intervals of rest are required; and it is then a wholesome change to turn from the task of invention to the routine of a profession, or to the light labor of reviewing, or of editing the writings of others. Reviewing I have done very little of, because I never felt that I had a right to sit in hasty judgment upon books; and with the exception of two brief periods of which I have made mention, I have held no editorial office. From my twentieth year I have relied almost solely upon my pen for support. It might have been better otherwise — who can tell? Not that I would ever have divorced myself from the Muse; but I would have kept her as the mistress of the ménage, not the maid. On the other hand, I owe much even of my happiness to the necessity of literary labor. A natural indolence would often have seduced me to postpone and avoid that which, even when entered upon reluctantly, has been to me joy and health.

Another question rises here, which has often risen in my mind before, as to what would have been the effect upon my life if I could have enjoyed the advantages, which I envied in others, of a university education, and (what would have been of greater value still) of early association with people of gifts and culture. The academic training would undoubtedly have saved me from much poor 'prentice work in story writing, and have afforded me a better preparation for a later start. But I doubt not all was as it should have been for my daily needs and ultimate good. Instead of accusing my fate, I breathe evermore a prayer of thankfulness for the blessings that have fallen to my share. I have had, not an adventurous, nor a greatly varied, but on the whole a happy course, and am now near its close. At the middle milestone between threescore and ten and fourscore, when my "way of life" should long since (adjudged by the average human experience) have "fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf," I am in the enjoyment of a tolerably green old age. I have known the sharpest afflictions, but "though much is taken" how much more "abides"! I still carry my five feet eight inches and my twelve stone avoirdupois with easy uprightness, and am active on my feet, if no longer alert to mount stairs two steps at a time or to cut 3's

and 8's on the ice. I have always enjoyed mixing a moderate amount of manual labor with my more sedentary pursuits, and continue to find pleasure and benefit in trimming a border, pushing a lawn-mower, or pruning a vine.

That something of the freshness of dawn is preserved for me in the evening of my days, I believe that I owe primarily to a sound though delicate constitution; to an instinctive, never ascetic obedience to the laws of health; and, above all, to a mind open to the "beauty and wonder" of the existence in which we are "embosomed." Add to this a philosophy of fortitude and renunciation which has enabled me to receive the rebuffs of fortune "with a heart for every fate," and which I have endeavored to carry into all the concerns of life; although I have been less able to live up to it (I grieve to record) at times of petty provocation than in crises of greater moment: a minor annoyance may perchance move me, while the weighty occasion settles me quietly to some unyielding substratum of my nature. I have often questioned why, with all my infirmities of will and passion, I have not more than once gone to wreck on this perilous voyage of time. But headstrong impulse and impetuosity of temper are not, after all, bad fellows for the crew, as long as the Captain keeps the deck.

VII

I made my fiftieth birthday the occasion of an autobiographic poem, which I find sums up my experience of life even better at seventy-five than it did at twoscore and ten. This is my apology for citing from it these stanzas in this place: —

Riches I never sought and have not found,
And Fame has passed me with averted eye;
In creeks and bays my quiet voyage is bound,
While the great world without goes surging by.

No withering envy of another's lot,
Nor nightmare of contention, plagues my rest;
For me alike what is and what is not,
Both what I have and what I lack, are best.

A flower more sacred than far-seen success
Perfumes my solitary path; I find
Sweet compensation in my humbleness,
And reap the harvest of a tranquil mind.

I keep some portion of my early dream;
Brokenly bright, like moonbeams on a river,
It lights my life, a far elusive gleam,
Moves as I move, and leads me on forever.

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The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
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